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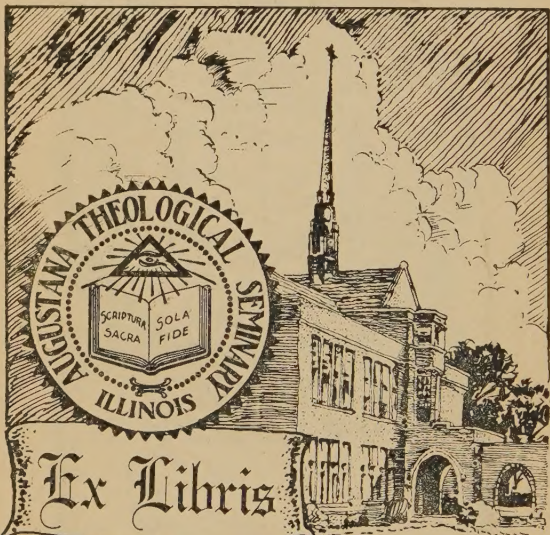
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Revelation and inspiration / by Dr. Rein



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REVELATION
AND
INSPIRATION



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REINHOLD
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REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

BY

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LONDON AND NEW YORK
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45 ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

A YEAR ago appeared the English translation of my book "The Fundamental Truths of the Christian Religion," and is now followed, I am happy to say, by the present work, "Revelation and Inspiration." This treatise is concerned with a problem which, for a considerable period, has aroused the keenest interest among theologians and Churchmen. I have endeavoured to show that while a modern thinker who follows the principles of historical criticism must definitely abandon the old theory of inspiration in all its forms and details, he need not necessarily deny the Divine character of the Bible. Analysis of the nature of religious experience, and also of the history of the inspiration doctrine, has provided a basis upon which I have attempted to outline the main features of a new theory of Inspiration. I trust that this theory will be found to avoid the errors of the old doctrine, while not surrendering any of its material value. It remains for the reader to decide whether and how far I have succeeded in realising this purpose.

PREFACE

Technicalities have been as far as possible avoided in this treatise, which is intended to appeal to all educated men who are troubled by doubts, whether the opinion that the Bible is a religious book is compatible with strict historical criticism of its contents. Those English theologians in particular who are in sympathy with the efforts of a modern positive school of theological thought will perhaps find some interest in the application of the method to one of the most important and fundamental problems of theology.

R. SEEBERG.

BERLIN,

April 26th, 1909.

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REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

I

FALL OF VERBAL INSPIRATION: MEANING OF THE THEORY

THE last few decades have witnessed the overthrow of a time-old wall, which for centuries had surrounded and protected the city of Protestant Christendom. Crumbling stones were removed, one after another; other stones were thereby loosened and fell out, until considerable portions of the bulwark gave way and all prospect of restoration was seen to be impracticable. It was resolved to remove the wall; some set to work with sighs, others with joy.

The wall to which I refer was the *Verbal Inspiration of the Bible*, the conviction that every word of Holy Scripture was given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to the authors of the Old and New Testaments. It has disappeared as if in one night. No theologian of any repute now upholds it; it is no longer taught in the schools, and even those members of the Church who hold

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fast to the old faith are beginning to break themselves of this habitual conviction.

No one who knows the history of the Church can doubt that the fall of the theory of Verbal Inspiration is an event of first-rate importance. It is not too much to compare its overthrow with the displacement of the old Ptolemaic theory of the world by the Copernican. But even yet, the significance of this event is not invariably or universally recognised, for in ecclesiastical practice men often involuntarily talk as if Verbal Inspiration still held its ground with certain modifications or restrictions, although in theory no one would care to profess it. It is always so. The mountain springs may run dry, but the waters still roar through the valleys, and then it is that they are often most dangerous. In the present case the danger consists in the use of two standards, sometimes that of Protestant freedom, sometimes the law of the alphabetical letter.

Consequently it is a matter of importance for every Protestant Christian to form for himself a reasoned judgment upon this question. This object may be achieved not merely by criticism or abandonment of Verbal Inspiration, but rather by attempts to discover what substitute Protestant Christendom can accept in its place. As everyone knows, Protestantism bases its teaching on Holy Scripture. Scripture, then, must be a sure authority. At one time its authority seemed to

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be securely based upon Verbal Inspiration. If that theory falls, as fallen indeed it has, the question then confronts us, how shall a substitute be found? To answer this question, tortuous theories which even the educated man can follow only with difficulty will not suffice: we must seek for simple thoughts, intelligible to all, which can be expressed in popular form, and which will enlighten without confusing.

Such is the object of this little book. It must inevitably subject to keen criticism old thoughts that have become dear to the old: it must also seek for new thoughts worthy of becoming dear to the young. I beg my readers not to be led astray by prejudice as they read the following pages, but to examine the matter honestly. Perhaps we may not be able to erect a wall as massive as the old bulwark: perhaps we may be forced to content ourselves with an iron palisade. However modest it may seem in comparison with the old wall, if it will provide a durable support and defence, it will render better service than any of which the old decayed and ruined wall is now capable.

The theory of Verbal Inspiration has been of incalculable service to the Church. This fact must not be forgotten even by those who reject the theory. Verbal Inspiration has differentiated the biblical books from all other literature, and has given them an irrefutable authority.

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Thus it has ever constrained the current of Christian thought to turn back upon its source, and by this effort to exclude ideas alien to Christianity, while securing authority and attention for the primordial elements of the Christian faith. Verbal Inspiration was essential to the diffusion of that biblical atmosphere throughout the Church which made our forefathers so conversant with the Scriptures in doctrine and life. It was one of the chief means of unifying Christian doctrines, and investing them with irrefutable authority in the face of all objections and doubts. It was comparable to an engine drawing a long train of wagons, or to an iron ring securely binding all Christian ideas into one complex whole. How easy was it to wield all the weapons of the Christian armoury when they were fastened to this handle ! The Church taught her doctrines : no Christian could dispute them, since for each an inspired foundation was at the Church's command. Did doubts arise in a soul, they were dispelled by scriptural texts. Did worldly temptations advance, a text drove them out. Did science discover new laws of nature or new facts inconsistent with biblical tradition, then God Himself bore witness against them through the words of His Spirit.

How simple and clear must have been the inner life of our forefathers with this theory of Verbal Inspiration ! Whether the beginning or the

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end of things was in question, the point of departure was sure, and a thousand sign-posts marked the way. For all effort and research there were fixed authoritative rules. So doubt was dissolved and thought bowed before the law of truth. The Bible was the truth, for was it not word for word inspired by the Spirit of God? We are almost inclined to envy that time when there was no strife about philosophic views of the world, when all doubt and disputation were so easily solved by statements of great profundity; when the fear of the world and the dread of death were banished by heavenly thoughts. The old Protestantism was superior to our modern views in one point, in its unshaken conviction of the unity of human knowledge and the absolute truth of the whole Christian doctrine. Wittenberg was just as sure of its business as Rome. Here the Bible, tradition and the Pope, there "God's word and Luther's teaching." *Roma locuta est* and *Verbum Dei manet in æternum*.

But here we ask in surprise, is the living, personal, evangelical faith compatible with this belief in a book and its inspired sentences?

II

THE CANON AND INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, AND THE MEDIÆVAL VIEW OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

ALMOST all higher religions possess sacred books. But these in general demand little attention, either because they are reinterpreted by the priests to suit their own requirements, or because, like erratic boulders, they now stand overgrown by the tendrils of a new faith. Their forms are elastic, and can be interwoven with those of a different nature to form one fabric. They are easily drawn into the stream of syncretism which often amalgamates the higher religions of paganism.

Conditions were different in the life of ancient Israel. Here, too, were collected the commands of God, the records of God's deeds, the words of God which had been uttered by the mouth of the prophets, the songs of God-inspired singers and the words of wisdom of the ancients. Gradually these were gathered together in a book, but only in succession did its component parts obtain a like authority. Then this authority became a fixed yoke which was laid on believers. Every word and every letter possessed unconditional authority. The "rules of the elders,"

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it is true, were added, but they were in principle only expositions of the Holy Scriptures. In this course of development which continued through centuries arose the idea of the *Canon*. The utterances of the Holy Scriptures, or the totality of these writings, are a firm and absolute authority upon doctrine and life. To accommodate the Scriptures to modern life or to derive new facts from them is only possible by interpretation. Thus, unknown to the originators, there rose side by side with the authority of the holy letters a second authority, that of the synagogue and its great teachers, or the power of *tradition*.¹

But later Judaism had also a strict *doctrine of inspiration*; the books were written through the Holy Spirit. Like a potion, the authors had received the Spirit, which so filled their hearts that they could write nothing but truth and wisdom. The idea of the canon wins in this way support from inspiration.

The inspired Old Testament canon was adopted by the Christian Church, which after a long course of development added the New Testament to it. This was the second part of the canon,

¹ Cf. for this and the following historical discussions: R. Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Vol. I. (2nd edition, 1908), pp. 49 f., 64 ff., 158 ff.; and also the essay, "Evangelium quadraginta dierum" in R. Seeberg, *Aus Religion und Geschichte*, Vol. I. (1906), p. 42 ff. Th. Zahn, *Grundriss der Geschichte des neutestamentlichen Canons*, 1901. A. Seeberg, *Des Katechismus der Urchristenheit*, 1903.

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inspired no less than the Old Testament. Thus Christendom, received from the synagogue not only the sacred book, but also the principle of the inspired canon. The latter was no less significant than the former. The former marked the boundaries of religious and moral knowledge, but the latter gave to this knowledge a special character as subordinate to a law implying the acceptance of fixed "doctrines."

Christian writings as such were not at first regarded by Christendom as providing a rule and standard of truth; the Old Testament was rather the standard authority. To this was then added a double series of authorities. Primitive Christendom experienced the ruling guidance of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit not only gave the power to perform miraculous deeds, but also gave the clear revelation of God in Christ through miraculous vision. It was no new revelation which was received, but a new and profounder understanding of the person of Christ, of His thoughts and of the influence which He exerted. The Spirit brings forth nothing new from Himself, but takes from the fulness of Christ all that He proclaims, interprets and applies. Hence Christ Himself comes in the Spirit to the disciples (John xvi. 12 ff., 8-11; xiv. 18 ff.).

However, this variable element was in connection with a permanent force from the outset. The latter was produced by the need for

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missionary preaching and a common Church life. To preach to the heathen was in the first place to expound Jesus' words and deeds. The principles and groundwork of this preaching are preserved in the first three Gospels. They contain a series of narratives recounting the acts of Jesus, and also selected portions of His discourses. In addition to this, catechumens were instructed from a Jewish catechism of morals worked over by a Christian hand, the so-called two "Ways," on which are based the frequent catalogues of virtues and vices to be found in the New Testament Epistles. There was certainly also a body of fundamental truths, comparatively fixed in character, and derived in essential points from the revelation given by Christ to the disciples after His resurrection. These fundamental truths were included in a short baptismal confession of faith of which Paul preserves for us a large fragment in 1 Corinthians xv. 3, 4. These were the chief elements composing the primitive Christian catechism or "tradition"; they were collectively regarded as "words of faith and commands of doctrine." Upon baptism, communion, and the last things there were also fixed forms of teaching, to which the Lord's Prayer was added.

There was thus a somewhat extensive store of facts, doctrines and moral rules, which Christendom from its earliest times possessed and used. These, however, existed at first as living "tra-

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dition," not as written word. To this tradition men referred when they spoke of the "Canon" of the Church in the second century. The "tradition" is thus older than the New Testament "Scripture," and became to a very considerable extent the basis of it.

But the New Testament also was formed during the period of which we speak. The events of Jesus' life were numerous and by no means easily remembered; hence arose a demand for a written record in the interests of mission work and of the catechumens. Thus our gospel according to St. Mark, tradition tells us, is the reproduction of a series of discourses which Peter held in Rome, and Luke wrote his gospel as an aid to the memory of a catechumen of high rank (i. 4). Thus arose the so-called Synoptic Gospels, or the primitive documents on which they were based—that question does not concern us here. At the same time the epistolary literature was beginning. As the authors of the Epistles were apostles, or at least men gifted with the Spirit, these letters were also regarded as authoritative documents, as indeed they were intended to be (e.g. 1 Cor. vii. 40). The final addition to this class of literature was the Johannine writings.

But it would be unhistorical to speak of the New Testament as complete at the end of the first or at the beginning of the second century. Even at the end of the second century there was no

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final collection of biblical books. In many Bibles, the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistles of James and II Peter were wanting, in others, on the contrary, were found such ancient documents as the 1st Epistle of Clement, the Epistle of Barnabas, the "Shepherd" of Hermas, and the Didache, writings which to us seem very inferior in some respects.

These additions or lacunæ are of minor importance in comparison with the fact that the development of the second century forced the Church to collect the many traditional books current during its primitive age under the unified conception of "Scripture," or to make use of them as a canon. The word "canon" was regularly used with this meaning from the fourth century onwards. Together with the Scripture the old "tradition" of the apostles still held its ground, but its days were numbered; the short baptismal confession in the West and the Bible in the East took its place in the third century. A vast spiritual struggle took place, which led the Church not to establish a new collection of sacred books—the collection already existed, as formed by Church usage—but to invest the existing collection with dogmatic authority. The Gnostics either based their ideas, which were borrowed from almost every religion, on the assertion that they were inspired by the Holy Spirit, or they had recourse to falsified sacred writings. The tremendous struggle against

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the Gnosis, the severest, in fact, experienced by the Church before the Reformation, obliged the Church to proclaim the New Testament books the only Holy Scriptures and the ecclesiastical episcopo-apostolical tradition the only authentic tradition.

Now there was a New Testament as well as an Old Testament, and both together formed the Holy Scriptures, for both were inspired by the Spirit of God. These conditions remained permanent for the Church. Since the fourth century the New Testament has been confined to the limits with which we are familiar. It is, together with the Old Testament, the original record of Divine revelation, the standard source and norm for the teaching and life of Christendom. The blessing and advantage which this final development brought have been incalculable. Men possessed a Divine book, an authority free from all error; men learned the eternal truth from historical documents.

The process of development, however, could not stop here.¹ The operation of two forces conditioned further growth. First the Church claimed for herself the right of expounding Scripture by asserting that Church doctrine and

¹ Cf. for the following: F. Kropatscheck, *Das Schriftprinzip der lutherischen Kirche*, Vol. I., 1904. R. Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, Vol. II. (1st edition), 153 ff., 176 ff. English Trans., *Text Book of the Hist. of Doctrines*, Lutheran Publication Society, Philadelphia.

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Scripture doctrine coincided always, and under all circumstances. In consequence men were obliged to adopt the most audacious interpretations of the words of the Bible: on principle, the biblical doctrine was to be explained in accordance with patristic teaching, or with the edicts of the popes. The authority of the Bible was recognised, but this authority could be modified to any desired extent. The resulting inconsistency eventually became intolerable: the Bible alone is truth, but the pope alone speaks the truth. Certain bold spirits recognised this contradiction towards the close of the Middle Ages. They disputed the authority of the pope and of the ecclesiastical teachers and ascribed to the Bible infallible truth. "The pope may err, Holy Scripture cannot err," said, for instance, William of Occam. That was the reason why the last century of the Middle Ages laid such stress on the inspiration of the Bible as written at the dictation of the Holy Spirit. Luther was not the first to recognise the verbal inspiration of the Bible and its authority even against Pope and Church doctrine; these ideas were often apparent in thought and language towards the close of the Middle Ages.

There was, however, another tendency which became of increasing importance: the official Church and the reformers were agreed that the Bible contained the *Divine Law*. The Bible was

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regarded in the same way as the papal decrees. Both were legal documents which could pronounce upon problems of life and faith after the manner of a legal code. These pronouncements were legally binding upon every Christian, for he belonged to the ecclesiastical state, and was therefore subject to its law. It was a matter of indifference under these circumstances whether a man's inward convictions were real, or whether the Spirit brought his heart into subjection to Scripture; he was bound to recognise the letter, and to conform to its decrees, exactly as secular laws do not demand or produce conviction, but require only outward submission. In the case of civil law so much is certainly intelligible and necessary: but if the principle is applied to any real religion, caricature is the result. However, even the reformers of the Middle Ages did not advance beyond this principle, which, indeed, they merely exaggerated. The legal authority of the pope was questioned, but only in order that this legal authority might be the more definitely transferred to the Bible, which contained "laws," just as the findings of councils or the decrees of the popes were laws legally binding for Christendom.

But religion is not law, and piety is not outward conformity to legal statutes, whether inspired or not; religion is an inward experience of the power of God, and piety is the free sur-

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render of self to the living Person of God. The mediæval interpretation of the authority of Scripture was in contradiction to the nature of the Christian religion and of Christian piety. This fact of necessity provided a further stimulus to progress.

III

LUTHER'S VIEWS OF THE BIBLE

THE decisive step was taken by Luther, who again displayed in this matter his religious genius and his clear perception.¹ It is difficult to give any concise account of his theory regarding the nature of Scripture; yet the attempt must be made. Luther gradually abandoned the Catholic authorities (ecclesiastical law, pope and councils), and clung only to the last of these authorities, Holy Scripture. The authority of Scripture was his weapon against Rome and the fanatics, and the foundation upon which he based the evangelical doctrine. Scripture was for him the inspired word of God. This was obviously but a small advance upon the theory of later mediævalism, yet it is conceivable that Luther in the strife of opinions made Scripture an absolute standard: even he at times speaks of "Divine law." Nevertheless his view of Scripture was entirely different from that of the Middle Ages.

¹ Cf. further, R. Seeberg, *Dogmengeschichte*, Vol. II. 285 ff. R. Grützmacher, *Wort und Geist*, Vol. II., 1902. O. Scheel, *Luthers Stellung zu der heil. Schrift*, 1902. W. Walther, *Das Erbe der Reformation*, Part I., 1903.

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When Luther refers to Scripture, he is thinking of the Gospel of Christ and His kingdom, of sin and grace, in short, of the religious content of Scripture, of "Christ and the Christian faith." Thus the value of a writing is determined by considering whether it "treats of Christ," that is, whether it has to do with Christian salvation or not. Everything else in the Scriptures is for Luther comparatively indifferent. Hence we can comprehend Luther's criticisms, which were remarkably bold for his time, concerning the origin of the biblical books and occasional errors in them. The authorship of Genesis is a matter of indifference to him; Ecclesiastes is not the work of Solomon; he would prefer to exclude the Book of Esther from the Canon; the Epistle to the Hebrews is wrong when it denies the second repentance; James wrote an "Epistle of straw"; the old prophets were often mistaken in their prophecies of the course of events in the world. So, too, Luther doubts the prophetic and apostolic character of the Revelation of John, placing it on a level with an old Jewish writing, the fourth Book of Ezra. He even classes it with the mediæval prophecies of Joachim of Floris, and with those of a writer immediately before his own time, Lichtenberger. Historical errors or defects of detail in the Bible never misled Luther in the least, for his real interests were attracted to other points. The Gospel of St. John,

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the Epistles of Paul and 1 Peter are for him "the real kernel and marrow of all the books . . . for in these thou findest not many works and wonderful deeds of Christ described: but thou findest painted with master hand how the faith in Christ overcomes sin, death and hell, and gives life, righteousness and blessedness, which is the right nature of the Gospel."

To weigh the real significance of these thoughts, reference must be made to Luther's theory of *faith*. His great discovery was this: according to him religious faith consists not in submission to a given doctrine, but is the personal sense and experience of God working through Christ, or the inward receiving of God with all His gifts. "For no one may rightly understand God or God's word unless he have the means thereto directly from the Holy Spirit. But no one can have this from the Holy Spirit unless by experiencing, trying and feeling, and in this same experience the Holy Spirit teaches as in His own school, outside which there is nothing taught save empty show, words and idle talk."¹ "Believest thou, so hast thou: believest thou not, so hast thou not."² "Christ is in the soul through faith as King, the will as servant."³ So the soul receives faith from God, and faith contains in itself God's gifts, forgiveness of sins and the

¹ Erlangen edition, Vol. XLV. 215 f.

² XXVII. 180.

³ Weimar edition, I. 263.

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Spirit who incites to good. Now if we regard this faith, the essential nature of which is acceptance and appropriation,¹ as a permanent condition in man, it may be characterised as confidence or trust in God's grace.

X By this new theory of faith Luther transformed the whole mediæval idea of religion. Instead of being a question of doctrines and commands, religion is for him a question of the active spiritual presence of God with all its gifts. Consequently faith is not, as formerly, outward submission or even an intellectual acceptance of doctrines and commands, but inward voluntary submission and empirical knowledge of the grace of the living and active God. But then Scripture ceases to be a code of laws based on the authority of the Church and becomes itself a living authority: "Everyone must believe solely on this account, namely, that it is God's word, and that he inwardly finds it to be truth" (Erl. xxviii. 340). But this statement implies the belief that only those elements of Scripture which can become the object of religious faith or inward experience will impart the Spirit, and that those elements again can alone be vivified or inspired by the Spirit. The evidence of experience or observation of the Spirit's working leads us to belief in Scripture, according to Luther. We believe the content of Scripture because it produces faith in us, and because we

¹ Erlangen edition, XII. 118.

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thus believe it we believe also that it is from God. But where this conviction is present, it is justifiable to use Scripture as the objective expression of Divine revelation, and as a standard by which to measure and judge the doctrines of Christianity.

This theory, however, is by no means complete. It certainly follows from Luther's criticism of the biblical books and their narratives that he himself actually believed only the religious content of Scripture to be Divine or inspired, but he never stated this directly. In the same way it is clear from the inner connection of thought in what sense and to what extent Scripture was authoritative to Luther, but yet he would at another time, without due previous reflection, make use of Scripture in all its parts, practically or polemically, as a Divine law. Finally, he did not, so far as I can see, clearly formulate the peculiarity of the biblical evidence and its pre-eminence over the word of God as preached. But all this is unimportant compared with the great advance that was due to Luther: by teaching us to recognise the nature of faith he at the same time fixed for ever the special nature of the authority of Holy Scripture. As is faith, so is its authority. Faith as outward submission knows only the authority of the letter, faith as inward submission presupposes the power of the Spirit as operative in the letter.

IV

THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION AS HELD BY CALVIN AND THE OLD PROTESTANT THEOLOGY: CRITICISM OF THIS DOC- TRINE

THE doctrine of inspiration, however, then followed a line of development which Luther's school could hardly have anticipated. Two influences determined this course. On the one hand the canon was required as a strong, sure and universally intelligible authority in support of Protestantism against Catholicism, and also as a moral rule of conduct for life. On the other hand the theory of faith as developed by Protestantism and the spiritual character of Scripture must be maintained. The latter desire found special expression in the sharp differentiation between Gospel and law. Both points of view forced men to lay strong emphasis on the inspiration of the Bible. For only an inspired Scripture offered a sure foundation for doctrine: Scripture alone, as bearer of the Spirit, could provide a psychological explanation of the origin of religious faith. Thus arose the old Protestant doctrine of inspiration.

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Its outlines were marked out by Calvin, the most talented of Luther's disciples.¹ God is, according to Calvin, the real author of the Holy Scriptures. The writers only wrote at the dictation of the Holy Spirit. Therefore their writings are "oracles of God." Such were the conceptions in vogue at the close of the Middle Ages. Calvin gave them Luther's subjective foundation: this origin of the Holy Scriptures is confirmed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit proceeding from Scripture. So a coherent system of thought was obtained. Scripture is inspired, word for word, by the Holy Spirit, for these words bring us the Spirit.

The doctrine of inspiration as formulated by the *old Protestant theology* was merely a careful and detailed development of these ideas. God gave the sacred authors the impulse to write, and He gave them by inspiration, not only the thoughts and facts, but also the words of what was to be written. Hence God is the real author of the sacred books, for by inspiration He gave the writers everything, even knowledge which they might have acquired by natural means for themselves. Accordingly Scripture is infallible truth, free from every error, free also from all solecisms and faults of expression. So much may be inferred, on the one hand, from the fact that Scrip-

¹ See the evidence in R. Seeberg, *Dogmengeschichte*, Vol. I. 384 f.

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ture bears witness to its own authority, and also from the fact that the power of the Holy Spirit so works on souls through Scripture that this inward witness convinces them of the Divine origin of Scripture. It is further maintained that Scripture is clear and intelligible and its own sole exponent, since the clear passages explain the obscure. For these reasons the Protestant Church needs no Pope. Scripture, with its absolute authority, has taken his place, and itself declares its content.

These are the main features of this famous theory. The leading thought is obvious: the fact that the Bible produces special effects is evidence of its special character and of the origin of this character; as the Spirit proceeds from the Bible, so the Bible proceeds from the Spirit. Nevertheless the theory as a whole is absolutely untenable, as will appear from the following considerations.

In the first place it is clear to everyone that the evidence of the Holy Spirit, as Luther conceived it, is applicable only to the religious content of Scripture. It is sheer nonsense to say that the accuracy of a genealogical table, for instance, or of the number of years of a king's reign, or of a miraculous story, or of the date of the composition of a book is guaranteed by the living witness of the Holy Spirit in ourselves. The Spirit can assuredly give us inward assurance of the

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grace of God, of the Divine presence of Christ, of sin and forgiveness of sins, of virtuous impulses, in short, of the religious and moral truths of Scripture. So much is fully consonant with our experience, as soon as we can realise that God Himself is present in our lives through these thoughts, and that in them His almighty will, which is love, subdues and frees our souls, and shows its power in us. But this course of religious experience can never lead us to any certain conclusions with reference to the several historical facts related by Scripture. An idea, correct in itself, has thus been perversely applied. The testimony of the Holy Spirit becomes completely useless if attempts are made to apply it to all kinds of objective events related by tradition. And it is just as clear that this witness fails absolutely when it is said to prove the inspiration of the individual words. It proves the truth and power of the thoughts, not the Divine origin of the words. This is especially obvious if we reflect that conversions are very rarely produced by literal quotations from the Bible, and almost invariably by a free reproduction of biblical thoughts.

But the theory that the words are inspired is also disproved by a cursory glance at the peculiarities of the biblical authors. Each of them writes in his own style, and has his own favourite thoughts and favourite phrases. Trivial events

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are mentioned, for instance, that Paul left his cloak and his books at Troas (2 Tim. iv. 13). Timothy is advised to drink wine instead of water for his stomach's sake (1 Tim. v. 23). Paul declares that he baptized certain persons in Corinth, but that he did not remember others besides these (1 Cor. i. 16). No one would regard such a confession of ignorance as inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Equally impossible is the belief that the biblical authors gained by inspiration their ideas of the cosmos, which they shared with all the ancients. To what purpose should God inspire ideas which men already possessed, and how could He inspire ideas which later ages found to be wrong? Read, for instance, the magnificent descriptions of nature in the Book of Job. The ancient cosmology everywhere is presupposed, but the exalting power of the praise given to the Divine Omnipotence is in no way diminished thereby. This, and not the writer's theory of nature, is the important point for the reader. Or are we to consider the theory of demoniacal possession in the Old and New Testaments, a theory common to popular beliefs and biblical books, as given by inspiration to the authors? Are we, therefore, to regard this theory as true and other popular beliefs as false? Or will anyone maintain the inspiration of the legendary story of Michael contending with the devil for the body of Moses, because Jude (v. 9) derived it from an old apocryphal writing?

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The theory of verbal inspiration is excluded, not only by the individual element and the personal character in many of the biblical writings, but also by the view of the world which these books represent and which they held in common with all the ancients. A further argument against the theory is provided by the frequent interpretations of Old Testament passages quoted in the New Testament upon the principles of rabbinical exegesis. Is it to be supposed that that God Who is truth, gave by inspiration to His servants that which is notoriously false? But it is notoriously false to regard the murder of the Innocents in Bethlehem as the "fulfilment" of the prophecy that Rachel would not be comforted for the death of her children (Matt. ii. 17 f.; Jer. xxxi. 15), or to make the virgin birth of Christ serve as a "fulfilment" of the word, "Behold a virgin shall conceive" (Matt. i. 22 f.; Isa. vii. 14), when in fact the passage in Isaiah definitely refers to a contemporary event, and has absolutely nothing to do with the Messiah. Nor would anyone discover in the argument of Galatians iv. 21 ff., which sees in the history of Sarah and Hagar, of Isaac and Ishmael, a type of the earthly and the spiritual city of God and its children, anything more than an ingenious fancy, if it had not happened to be Paul, the inspired man, who conceived this idea.

We may go a step further. There are obvious

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errors in Scripture. This is not the place to discuss the relationship of the old Oriental historical tradition to the biblical historical books. A few observations will be sufficient to make this assertion intelligible to all. Matthew xxvii. 9 quotes a text as Jeremiah's which in reality is in Zechariah xi. 12 f.: 1 Corinthians x. 8 speaks of twenty-three thousand who fell in one day in the wilderness, but in reality, according to Numbers xxv. 9, it was twenty-four thousand. The sepulchre of which Acts vii. 16 speaks was indeed bought by Abraham (Gen. xxiii. 16 f.; l. 13), but not from the sons of Emmor, as is alleged: from them it was Jacob who bought a piece of land (Gen. xxxiii. 19), in which Joseph—not Jacob—was buried (Joshua xxiv. 32). In this passage of the Acts we see that the author's memory had failed him. In Galatians iii. 17 Paul reckons from the covenant with Abraham to the giving of the law four hundred and thirty years, but this date, taken from Exodus xii. 40, refers in reality only to the duration of Israel's sojourn in Egypt. According to Matthew xx. 30 two blind men sit near Jericho; Mark x. 46 names only one. Matthew viii. 28 speaks of two possessed in the territory of the Gadarenes; according to Mark v. 2 there was only one. Without question, in these instances, one of the authors is wrong.

These points naturally make no material difference, and touch faith just as little as other errors

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that might be mentioned. But to the theory of verbal inspiration these simple facts are fatal, for they would lead to the blasphemous thought that God Himself had made mistakes. To avoid this conclusion the supporters of verbal inspiration find themselves reduced to all kinds of apologetic devices, which have more seriously injured the cause of Christianity than many direct attacks.

But the difficulties in the way of the theory of verbal inspiration are by no means yet exhausted. We know that the majority of the books of the Old and New Testaments were based upon various source-documents from which extracts were made, worked over and welded together. To take the best-known examples: let us consider only the five books of Moses or the first three Gospels. From the standpoint of verbal inspiration the question arises: What, then, really was inspired, our books or those sources? The answer can only be, our books. But if the Spirit of God really "suggested" to the authors "the matter and the words," as the old dogmatic theology said, why should they have troubled to turn to earlier sources of any kind? If Luke knew that the Holy Spirit would direct him, why did he make the careful study of which he tells us (i. 3)? If it is replied that the sources too were inspired, we reach the obvious absurdity that compilations such as the official lists or ministerial records used by the authors of the books of Kings, were the product of

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inspiration. But if these sources were not inspired, how can the books which depend on them be inspired? If, in order to surmount the difficulty, it is urged that the arrangement, the selection, the criticism of the matter taken from the sources is inspired by God, the argument may hold good, but it proves at the same time with relentless certainty the falsity of verbal inspiration.

Thus the old doctrine of inspiration is proved on every side to be untenable. It is impossible that works which are stamped with the individuality of their authors, which offer an antiquated cosmology or an obsolete method of biblical exegesis, which contain demonstrable errors, or were composed after previous historical research, should be word for word inspired by the Spirit of God. Verbal inspiration is thus an impossible hypothesis.

We must also be careful not to regard the situation as if the theory of verbal inspiration were "really" Christian and its abandonment a kind of concession to the world. Such a view is historically false. The New Testament knows no special inspiration of the letter, but places the spoken word of the apostles upon precisely the same level as their epistles (2 Thess. ii. 15). Moreover, one condition presupposed by the theory of verbal inspiration is practically excluded by the consideration that the Christian, even under the influence of the Spirit, can never say any-

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thing which contradicts his religious consciousness (1 Cor. xii. 2, 3), for "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" (1 Cor. xiv. 32). On the other hand, that kind of inspiration, in which the prophet in ecstatic fervour forgets himself and the world and becomes only the pen or tongue of a Deity, was far from unknown in the ancient world, and was then introduced into Jewish and Christian thought by the theories of Plato and Philo. At first it was used in a harmless way, as it is, in fact, a comparatively suitable mode of expressing the idea that the content of Scripture comes from God. This Greek idea did not attain its full importance until it was combined with the Jewish conception of the canon. Now every single word was regarded as of legal validity, and precisely on that account every single word was said to be given to man by the inspiration of God. It was not interests specifically Christian, but the theories and leading ideas of later Judaism, as also of the Platonic philosophy, which produced this "old" theory of inspiration.

It is thus immediately clear that the theory represents no specifically Protestant possession of our Church. That it has made its way into the Protestant Church is due to the fact that it was a theory very generally maintained about the end of the Middle Ages. Hence both the Council of Trent, and especially the Vatican Council, professed it. But there is nothing specially

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Protestant in verbal inspiration. The new basis given to it by Protestantism is, as we have shown, utterly incompatible with the theory itself. It may indeed be asserted that this refoundation of the theory upon the "witness of the Holy Spirit" is at the same time its Protestant refutation.

THE BIBLE AND BIBLICAL CRITICISM: THE CONCEPTION OF REVELATION

WE can now understand why not only theology, but also the Church, has abandoned the old theory of verbal inspiration. It is an insufficient hypothesis, because it does not explain the facts it undertakes to explain. But the knowledge that a hypothesis does *not* explain the facts naturally does not help us to secure an explanation of the matter in question. Hence the problem arises whether we can explain the facts upon some other principle, for they are by no means so simple as to be intelligible without explanation. The refutation of the old hypothesis may have shattered an old line of defence, but brings not so much as two stones together for the construction of a new bulwark.

It is first necessary to give a clear statement of the situation. An ancient book exists known as the Bible or the Book. It is in itself a literary monument, including writings which cover a period of a thousand years. As to the origin and the age of these books critics are at variance to the present hour. This strife seems, so far as the New Testa-

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ment is concerned, to have a certain practical importance, because the origin of some of its books is postponed to late, post-apostolic time. Meanwhile, calm consideration of the state of affairs will show that such criticism is less significant than it seems. For the Church must regard Scripture as a whole : and as the message of God to the human race : in it the power of His Spirit becomes operative. It is this fact which gives these manifold books a unity. In this light it is clear that for the religious or practical view of the matter it makes little difference whether this book or that book was or was not composed by an apostle, although ascribed to him, or whether it is of later origin than has been commonly thought. We do not know who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, and it would make little difference to us if current tradition regarding 2 Peter or the Pastoral Epistles were proved to be incorrect, and we likewise had to confess our ignorance in these cases. The second and third Gospels were not composed by apostles, nor if the apostolic authorship of the fourth Gospel were disproved would our faith be shaken. The power of the Spirit, which Luther and Schleiermacher admired in this Gospel, would always remain visible to faith, and we should sooner or later be unable to evade the conclusion that the book was written from personal and detailed knowledge of the history of Jesus. I do not say that I hold the composition of the book by a

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“Great Unknown” as proved: I only wish to show that, even were such proof forthcoming, the religious and practical view of Scripture remains a possibility no way destroyed. This is especially true of the Old Testament. Time was when the theory that the so-called five books of Moses were written by Moses, or that Isaiah xl.-lxvi. was the prophet's composition, was maintained with desperate energy. The general rejection of this view in modern times has not undermined men's faith. Of what profit to faith is a name—perhaps little known—or a date in the title of a book? Faith grasps the books as a unity, or as the Bible, regarding the effects which proceed from them as a unity. This is a point of view wholly different from that adopted by critical science. It is, in truth, high time that every school of thought put an end to tactless appeals to popular sentiment as if the old Bible faith could be maintained or destroyed with the “genuineness” or “spuriousness” of individual biblical books. Such appeals only obscure for those who make them and for others the real and far deeper difference underlying the conflict of religious views.

These observations should serve to explain why we need not enter into questions of Biblical criticism in the following pages. For our purpose the Bible—and especially the New Testament—must be considered as a unity. We think of *one* book. This book has exerted directly or in-

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directly, through its own words, or through interpretation and application of them, a vast influence on the religious life of mankind, and its influence to-day is no less powerful on all to whom its contents have been handed down. We are concerned rather with this content than with the words and formulæ as such, or with the names of the authors and the dates of composition. This content consists of ideas, opinions and judgments which stand in immediate connection with a series of historical events. The men who first experienced this spiritual content attained this experience as a result of definite historical impressions. The God of Israel led His people out of Egypt, the house of bondage: He gave His people a law: He helped them in divers needs. In these facts of history men became conscious of His Almighty presence, His grace and faithfulness. And men drew from the facts of the past, as also from the prophecies of the present, the certainty that God would lead His people to a glorious goal through the miracles of His power and love. Jesus Christ came. He taught and He healed. In His coming men experienced the fulfilment of the promises made to Israel. In it men felt the realised sovereignty of God as present. In it men recognised the nature and the works of God. He died and rose again from the dead. The Risen One was seen by His disciples, and they felt the influence of His presence. From these

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facts they learned that He is Lord of heaven and earth, that He wills to be operative on them and on the world, omnipresent and omnipotent in grace and faithfulness, giving forgiveness of sins and the Spirit. The might of the Spirit which Jesus had promised penetrated men's hearts and made all those to whom He came effective instruments for His work. So man became conscious that the Holy Spirit henceforth penetrates the reciprocal influence of man upon man, in that a man's words can produce divine effects in other men.

Revelation is not the imparting of certain abstract ideas to the human race: revelation is history. In history a man's spirit is developed by experience gained from contact with the world-movement which is his environment. If, then, God's revelation is history, it is the course of guidance and education to which God subjects the human spirit, in order to fill it with the heavenly world. God reveals Himself in the world, that mankind may experience Him and His working, and thereby enter into blessed fellowship with Him and come to a new understanding of the meaning of the world. Since salvation or redemption is the goal of this history, or the import conveyed by it to the human mind, it becomes a history of revelation or salvation. As in all history, this particular thread of connection is observed to run through facts and

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through the ideas, thoughts or words which arise from the facts. But the goal of this history is to arouse man's consciousness of the active power of God. Hence it follows that the facts in which this history reveals its course certify to man the operative presence of God. For this reason these facts are distinct from the common or regular connection of events. They are in themselves characteristically marvellous, or they are so constituted that man is through them made aware of the presence of God, and in them feels the power of God. The men of ancient times who naturally were the first to receive the revelation of God stood in special need of miraculous and thereby forcible and striking facts that they might attain to the experience of the living God as operative in history and in nature. But these historical facts were meant to evoke fixed and clear reflections of them in the human mind. So it was necessary that they—like all historical facts—should be translated by men into thoughts and words. But not only in this indirect sense do thoughts and words belong to revelation, but also in the direct sense that such thoughts and words themselves were imparted to mankind by God through some form or other of natural mediation, so that they are themselves also facts of revelation. Thus the words of Jesus are not only interpretations of certain facts, but are new facts of revelation in which God

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becomes operative in mankind. They are no less a direct revelation of God than, for example, the awaking of Christ from the dead. So too the giving of the law on Sinai is not less a fact of revelation than the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt. When a "word of Jahve's" takes hold of a prophet, or when the seer "in the spirit" beholds great pictures of struggle and victory in the great world-drama, God reveals Himself herein too as directly as in the great crises of history or its marvellous events, for such words given to man by God are also historical events effected by Him.

God's revelation is thus history. In other words, God reveals Himself to the human spirit through His guidance of the course of historical evolution. This comprises in itself both the visible facts of the history regarded as revelation, and also the thoughts and words evoked by God in the actors who are part of this history. Now either those persons understand the facts of revelation and learn to interpret them, or they complete the facts of revelation by thoughts imparted to them as impulses to be realised in history. In reality these two elements are commingled. There are prophets who can only "see," and others again who show themselves real "speakers" of God.

From the great events of history mankind thus gained new religious views and judgments. But

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this revelation was imparted to individual men also in a special degree. The necessities of the time, the needs of the Churches, some special occurrence of marvellous nature, a dream, a vision, etc., force on the individual thoughts, determinations, deeds, by means of which he recognises for himself the greatness of the new revelation and makes it intelligible to others. Paul sees the Lord, and gains in consequence his special understanding of the Gospel. He has a vision at Troas : it urges him to a deed of world-wide significance, and he transfers his mission work to the soil of Europe. Peter sees in a vision clean and unclean animals together in a sheet, he is bidden to kill and eat, and the thought of the universality of salvation dawns upon him. The new ideas are presented in those great facts in themselves accessible to many, as they are also presented in similar special experiences undergone by leading spirits.

There thus arises in humanity a new view of God and His working, of man, of his needs and of the tasks before him. We observe a number of realised ideas which are not the product of intentional research, nor are gained by theoretical speculation. Men naturally strive to appreciate and understand them, but they come to man from without, they arise because events have happened or happen, and not from human research or will. The new knowledge is based upon facts.

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Abstract from the chain of cause and effect the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the experiences and visions of the old prophets, the deeds of Christ, the appearances of the Risen One, the marvellous stirrings of the Spirit, and the new ideas would either be non-existent or would appear as empty and unstable speculations.

Such, then, was the new heavenly world of ideas and ideals, of gifts and tasks, of powers and blessings. It stirred thought mightily, and so became invested with such expressions and ideas as the time offered. But this new world was not created by meditation or by a technical nomenclature: it was given to men from without; events and facts evoked in them feelings, ideas and experiences. The immediate consciousness that an almighty spirit was present and was operative, creating, forming, and guiding the course of history, whether progressive or retrogressive, provided the new element for mankind. And the very fact of this connection enabled man to receive it, not as a set of purely subjective ideas, but as objective operative reality. The new world came to man in facts, through the influence of which man became also subjectively conscious of the new reality.

This is what we call *revelation*. We can conceive this revelation actively, or as God's working: we then have in mind the fact of God's guidance and formation of history, and the Divine influence

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of this history on the spirit of those who received the revelation. Or we may regard revelation as the product of this Divine action: we then think of the course of history formed by God and representing itself in facts: we think also of the spiritual content which the bearers of revelation have acquired through their consciousness of those Divine effects, and which they in their turn have handed on to mankind. ✓

Revelation has happened in historical time. Therefore it must once have had a beginning and also have had an end, or it will yet have an end. From the Christian standpoint revelation is centred in Christ; He is the revelation or the Word of God (John i. 1; Heb. i. 1-2). Revelation may, then, be assumed to cease when the Spirit of Jesus Christ ceases to produce essentially new effects, that is, new experiences and new knowledge. But this, as history shows, happened at the close of the apostolic period. Since, further, Christ looked on His work as the completion and fulfilling of the revelation of God in Israel, the beginning of revelation obviously coincides with the beginnings of the religion of Israel. Beyond these limits lies only God's last revelation at the end of the world.

Historical facts continue to live, on the one hand in their direct effects—we shall speak of this presently; on the other hand we gain concrete knowledge of them from the original docu-

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ments to which they have given rise. But original documents are not merely casual records of the past ; by their nature they are themselves a part of the past which they narrate. Since, then, the writings of the Old and New Testaments are parts of the religious revelation in history to which they bear evidence, we may characterise them as original documents of the Divine revelation.

Revelation and Scripture are not, therefore, in themselves identical conceptions. Revelation is the sum of all the Divine actions and influences which have led men to salvation and to the knowledge of salvation. Scripture is, on the contrary, the literary monument which tells us of these deeds and of this knowledge. It is a special effect of revelation. Revelation is thus a wider conception. But since Scripture is itself a literature precipitated, so to speak, by the process of revelation through history, it is thus indirectly itself also revelation. But because *we* possess no other means of interpreting this revelation-history and its thoughts than that provided by Scripture, the content of Scripture is for us the expression of Divine revelation as its first and fundamental influence upon the spirit of mankind.

Meanwhile a question of decisive importance immediately arises. The arguments which we have just propounded appear correct to the Christian, but he also requires assurance as to the reason of their correctness. This assurance can

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be gained only in *one* way, namely by considering whether the evangelical faith is conscious of such a revelation. If this is not so, all the arguments that have been brought forward are mere assertions and dogmatic teaching, or at the best statements of historical fact. These would be no less alien to faith than the old doctrine of inspiration, and could not become personal religious conviction.

Thus the problem for solution is how faith in the evangelical sense wins the certainty that the revelation is reality and not merely a historical or philosophical hypothesis of greater or less validity. This is a question of first-rate importance.

Our starting-point is that totality of ideas taken from Holy Scripture and proclaimed in the Church, whether in the form of preaching or through any other mode of individual influence, as in religious education or religious talk. This thought at once opens to us a new and strange world which stands in many ways in contradiction to the facts of the world known to us and to the views and judgments we have formed upon it; it gives the impression of the unreal and the unpractical. We are apparently asked to consider a series of difficult paradoxes and a perfervid longing for peace and blessedness, a prospect which may attract the heart but cannot satisfy a spirit struggling for reality. Such is the outward appearance, and this

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opinion is confirmed the more carefully this new world is considered. Neither the logical connection of these ideas, nor the purity of their moral teaching, nor in fact any appeal to the intellect can secure recognition of Christian ideas as such. And even if temporary recognition were attained, it would merely be imposed upon the soul from without, and not accepted as the result of inward experience.

This inward acceptance is based upon a most remarkable inward experience. The complex of ideas becomes endowed with life. Man feels a personal Will, comprehending the many ideas which he has learned, in them and through them laying hold upon the soul, moving it and subduing it. It is thus a living personal spirit, whose individual power we feel and accept because He penetrates us with these ideas. No longer do the words of old time alone speak to us, but in them the living God moves our hearts. Very different in character are the origins of these ideas, which again are no less manifold; they form no "system" free from contradiction, and almost always bear traces of their peculiar origin. But however numerous the differences perceptible to the critical historian, the seeking soul feels in these ideas the living presence of God and forgets their manifold nature, which for the soul becomes the single expression of the Divine will, eternal and almighty.

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We need not now analyse this experience further.¹ The result is enough; the thoughts of revelation become so active in our soul that we feel them immediately as the expression of the Divine will, operative and present. Now the question propounded above may be answered. Since we experience in the thoughts of Scripture a Divine effect, we characterise it on the ground of experienced faith as Divine revelation. It is thus no merely theoretical knowledge, no mere repetition of traditional history, when we speak of a revelation of God, but it is a judgment formed by faith, to which we thus give expression. But hence it follows that it is faith as known from the evangelical standpoint that leads us to assume the reality of Divine revelation. Faith and revelation correspond to and demand each other, for revelation, and nothing else, produces faith, and faith arises from revelation which forms its content. Where there is revelation there is faith, and as is the revelation so is the faith. Or from the standpoint of our own experience: because there is faith there is revelation, and because such a faith exists, therefore this revelation is possible.

A further point becomes obvious in this con-

¹ Cf. R. Seeberg, *Grundwahrheiten der christlichen Religion*, 4th edition, 1906, p. 152 ff. English Trans., *The Fundamental Truths of the Christian Religion*, Williams and Norgate, Crown Theological Library, p. 288 ff.

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nection. *Our* experience of the historical revelation certifies to us not only the teachings and ideas of revelation as truth, but shows also the reality and the Divine character of the historical facts which were the origin of these ideas. For how could we regard as truth ideas, for instance, which the apostles gained in fellowship with the risen Christ unless the resurrection were really true? But if we experience these ideas as truth, the reality of the facts on which they were founded cannot be doubtful.

There is, then, a reality of world-wide importance, the revelation of God, through which He has become and becomes operative in mankind. No hypothesis is here expressed, but a fact of which each becomes conscious who is drawn into the sphere of revelation and thereby led to faith.

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VI

REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

HITHERTO we have treated the conception of revelation as a uniform conception. But after perusal of the last section the reader will see that processes of somewhat different nature have been included under one term, revelation, which has been used to denote: (1) the interference of God in history by means of special effects due to His action; (2) the several individual impulses and experiences which enabled and necessitated the prophets and apostles to understand these facts, while this understanding also was itself revelation; (3) our immediate consciousness of the presence of God as operative within us, a consciousness which we gain from the ideas and opinions formulated by these processes. There is, however, an essential and obvious unity underlying these three applications of the term "revelation." The point at issue in each case is the influence of God upon the human mind, an influence apparent under different forms, but directed to arouse recognition and appreciation of God, submission to His will and a desire to serve Him. This cause and its effects are always miraculous in their nature.

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But the difference between these uses of the term "revelation" must not be overlooked. Revelation, in the first sense, implies the fact that God reveals to mankind His nature and working in great events which appeal to all, or in special individual experiences, in order that individuals may trace and mark Him and His working. Again, the second use of the term expresses the thought that these facts of revelation so influence particular men that they formulate concepts and words to express the Divine action as disclosed in history. The third use, on the contrary, states that through these formulæ the Divine influence continues operative upon the history of mankind for their salvation. The influence of the facts thus depends upon their transformation into ideas, while these ideas exert their influence because they bring the power of the facts home to the experience of daily life. Revelation by facts leads to revelation in words; revelation in words is based upon revelation by facts. Had those facts not been transformed into words, they would have remained ineffective: if the words could not reproduce the effects of the facts, they would be meaningless and powerless.

Thus the revelation-word stands midway between the revelation-fact and our experience of its meaning. Without the word the effects of the fact had never reached us. How, then,

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did this word arise? In course of transmission to ourselves, it is known to have undergone many transformations, as doctrine and dogma were reformulated by those who wished to impress the force of the word upon other minds. But these transformations, in so far as they are effective, merely recall the ideas enounced by the first heralds of the Divine operation. The ideas, and not the mode of their expression, are the vital point. With these first messengers we are therefore concerned, and the question at issue is whether their words or ideas correctly express the Divine influence as operative in revelation.

These first messengers in the Old and New Testaments have given expression to teachings, admonitions and promises of many kinds; they had a clear conception of God's nature and working; they formed judgments upon the nature of man and his relation to God, as also on the history of mankind. It is precisely these their thoughts, judgments and formulæ in which the Divine will is manifested to us. Have, then, these thoughts of the first witnesses the same value as the judgments formed upon Christ and Christianity by Pontius Pilate, for example, or Caiaphas, Tacitus, Pliny or Celsus?

We reply to this question in the negative, firstly because none of these persons were really "witnesses" of Christ, or because their know-

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ledge of Him was nothing more than outward acquaintance. It seems practically self-evident that only the disciples of Jesus were in a position to make any definite statements as to His nature and will. Nevertheless, the problem is not so simple as it appears. No one can say whether *all* the disciples of Christ—even apart from the wider circle—were competent to express their great experiences in permanent form, for example the dull Philip or the pessimistic Thomas. We know, on the other hand, that men who did not belong to the immediate company of Jesus ventured thus to formulate their ideas: no less a man than Paul was one of them, whether he cared to admit his inferior position or not. How, then, did these men attain their sure knowledge and their clear judgment, which is its own confirmation to us of its Divine truth? It is usually replied that they stood so near the facts of revelation that they easily gained the right understanding of them, or that their clear insight enabled them to penetrate the essential nature of the facts.

But neither answer is adequate. Many were well acquainted with the facts of revelation who yet gained no insight into their nature, and to explain enlightenment in these matters as due to natural acumen wholly fails to correspond with the view of the most acute among those witnesses of Christ who says that the natural man re-

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ceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them (1 Cor. ii. 14). But, above all, this explanation is entirely inconsistent with the consciousness of those witnesses of Christ who believed that they were in absolutely certain possession of the truth. Now this consciousness cannot be regarded as self-delusion: its title is confirmed by the religious experience of the whole Church and also by our own experience. The witnesses of Christ not only knew that the words of Christ possess abiding truth (Matt. xxiv. 35; 1 Thess. iv. 15; Gal. vi. 2; 1 Cor. vii. 10, 12, 25; ix. 14; Acts xx. 35), but they claimed a like authority for their own words also. Christ Himself had promised them that not they but the Spirit of the Father should speak in them (Matt. x. 20), and that what they should loose or bind, that is, allow or forbid, should be allowed or forbidden in heaven, or with God (Matt. xvi. 19). Accordingly they demanded obedience for their words (2 Cor. ii. 9; vii. 15; 2 Thess. ii. 15; Acts xv. 28). This demand they made in the consciousness that the Spirit was operative in them, so that they did not speak words which came of man's wisdom, but knew through the Spirit "that which is given us by God."

Now their words are accompanied also by a "demonstration of the Spirit and of power"

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(1 Cor. ii. 4-16): Holy Spirit and Divine power are operative in their words, which, therefore, are really God's word and power (Rom. i. 16; 1 Thess. i. 5, 6; Eph. vi. 17). The witnesses of Christ have thus the consciousness that they possess the Spirit and speak through the Spirit (1 Cor. vii. 40).

But the working of the Spirit in them is not conceived as if it were the Divine revelation as such. The revelation in itself is the mystery of the Divine counsels of salvation which now become manifested in history in the gifts of God (1 Cor. ii. 7-12). The Spirit given by God to His witnesses is, on the contrary, the means to knowledge of the revelation and to expression of this knowledge (1 Cor. ii. 10, 12, 13). If we try to express clearly this somewhat intricate idea, three thoughts present themselves. (1) God reveals Himself; He works in deeds and in words and in the general scheme for salvation. So far as the Spirit of God is energy or the instrument of His activity, it can also be said that God's revelation consists in the activity of the Spirit. (2) But the natural man does not comprehend this Divine revelation or activity. (3) On that account God causes His Spirit, which is active in the revelation, so to lay hold of His witnesses that they thereby become capable of understanding and interpreting this revealing activity of His. Now when the witnesses declare the

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operation of God, which is, of course, also an activity of the Spirit, in intelligible thoughts and words, through the influence of the same Spirit, then the Spirit of God becomes thereby active in their hearers or readers.

These explanations should make the matter clear. We are not to suppose that God's will that salvation should be possible, or, in other words, His Spirit, which is the cause of revelation, took hold of its first heralds in precisely the same degree as it afterwards held all who experienced its effects. It is the same Spirit Who performs all this, and in such a way that His operation is effective in various waves of impulse which proceed one from another. The Spirit of God produces, in the first place, the revelation or the facts of salvation in word and deed. Now this revelation is to become historically operative in humanity. For this purpose it is necessary that witnesses to it should arise who recognise and can express its nature in a way that will make it operative. It is the Spirit that works in revelation who, by special stimulus, brings forth in the first witnesses this understanding whereby revelation can be made historically operative. And it is the production of this understanding which *we* characterise as *inspiration*. Inspiration consists in the fact that the Spirit of revelation creates in His first witnesses the right, sufficient and efficacious understanding

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of revelation. And only because such an understanding has been secured did revelation become operative in history, for because the first line of witnesses possessed this special knowledge, the Spirit of revelation entered into history as a creative factor. From revelation streams, then, into mankind the Spirit of God Who called it forth, but the revelation becomes historically operative through the intelligence of its first witnesses. Revelation can become the ground of a new life in ourselves, because it has evoked in its first witnesses an adequate understanding of its content. So revelation reaches in inspiration its concrete and historically effective conclusion; in other words, inspiration is the first and fundamental historical effect of revelation. Because revelation was transformed through inspiration into clear human thoughts and words, it became operative in humanity. Now that we have thus determined the relation of revelation to inspiration, the nature of the latter can be more minutely examined.

VII

THE IDEA OF INSPIRATION: NO INSPIRATION OF FACTS: AUTHORITY OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

WE retain the term "inspiration." We are justified in so doing, for we have to deal, in our opinion also, with an influence of the Spirit on the souls of particular men. But we define the conception otherwise and more precisely than the old dogmatic theory defined it. That school regarded inspiration as suggestion of the facts and of the words; we regard it simply as the influence of the Spirit directed to produce the understanding of the given facts of revelation. Inspiration is thus not revelation, but is part of the consummation of revelation. Revelation in itself consists of historical facts caused by God, to which, of course, utterances directly caused by God can belong, but it becomes a reality to mankind only so far as it is understood and becomes universally intelligible and efficacious. If this result is to be produced, inspiration must work as we have shown.

This line of thought will lead us to a clearer and more definite statement of the question

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than is usual. In itself the term "inspiration"—infusing the Spirit or endowing a man with the Spirit—is, of course, applicable whenever the Spirit of God moves a human soul. But the term has been limited to imply that form of infusion which finds expression in words. In this sense all bearers of revelation are inspired. The prophet, whose soul God so moves through feelings and visions that it is impelled to break forth in words which the speaker does not understand, is inspired. So also is the preacher of the Gospel who interprets prophetic words and the phenomena of history, and so makes them effective. But these are processes of such obviously different nature that they demand separate treatment. Inspiration may certainly be inferred when a prophet, when Jesus, or when an apostle is permitted to behold absolutely new realities through the Spirit: but these cases are not the same as those in which the Spirit of revelation so grips a man that he is impelled to frame for himself intelligible thoughts and judgments on these newly revealed realities. Now Scripture, indeed, reports cases of the former kind, but it presents itself—apart perhaps from the Revelation of John—entirely as a phenomenon of the latter kind. Scripture is not revelation, but the first fundamental effect of revelation. The question before us is not whether the prophets were from God, but whether the Scripture is

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from God ; we are thus obviously concerned only with inspiration in this narrower sense. We differentiate, therefore, inspiration as a form in which revelation appears from the special inspiration of the biblical authors as the first effect of revelation. A man may very well be inspired in the latter as in the former sense, or he can be inspired only in one of these senses. The biblical authors were partly inspired in both ways. But we have to deal only with that special form of inspiration through which they became teachers of the human race.

This more precise definition will clearly show what effects inspiration produces in the soul and what it does not produce. Inspiration can never bring to the soul the knowledge of natural or historical facts which man would not otherwise know ; it leads him only to the understanding, to the interpretation and to the right judgment of facts. Thus a man can never be inspired with the knowledge of evolution in the fact of creation, or of any laws of nature : neither can he have by inspiration knowledge of the lives of Abraham, Moses, David or even knowledge of Christ's birth, His words and deeds, His death on the cross and His resurrection. The knowledge of all these matters which the inspired men possessed they gained in the natural way, from old records, popular opinions, traditions, reports from eye-witnesses, and in the most

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fortunate cases, from their own observation. Our authors, then, gained their knowledge of these and other facts by natural means; we are therefore able to test their knowledge critically, and if the case arise, show it to be insufficient, distorted or wrong. This truth demands clear and definite statement, because current opinion of the Bible suffers from an unhealthy timidity and indecision which is burdensome in many ways. If we hold the opinion that inspiration gives knowledge of historical facts which could not otherwise be known, then every fact related in the Bible must naturally be accepted as guaranteed by inspiration. And if, nevertheless, individual facts are surrendered to criticism, the old theory can only be retained against the monitions of conscience, or the sense of historical truth must be devitalised in order to save the hypothesis. The hateful trick of changing colours to meet requirements is injurious both to religion and history, and is by no means unexampled among modern theologians and laymen. On one side man is anxious to save "something," on the other side to concede "something," and so finally all is abandoned. The old theory of inspiration was too strictly formulated to lend itself to this juggling on the part of people who wish to preserve the past as held by "the old" and yet wish to be "modern." It is preferable to abandon the theory *altogether*, and we have now seen that

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abandonment is justifiable ; Scripture itself indisputably testifies that inspiration does not teach a knowledge of facts, but the interpretation of known facts. The interpretation, not the knowledge, is the product of inspiration. When we have recognised this fact, we can leave biblical criticism to do its work honestly in its own sphere, and can at the same time guard our positive faith from all the manipulations of criticism.)

Are we, then, led astray by the idea that after all Scripture does recognise knowledge of facts as effected through inspiration ? Let us look at some examples in the New Testament where the authors lay particular weight on the reality of some incident : how do they prove this reality ? By reference to the Holy Spirit, for example ? No ; they pursue a very different and wholly natural method ; their arguments upon the certainty of any tradition in question are those which all men would use under similar circumstances. In 1 Corinthians xv. 3 ff. Paul deals with the evidence of the reality of Christ's resurrection. The cogency of this evidence is a matter of supreme interest to him. What, then, does he do ? He states that he had delivered to the Corinthians that which he had first received, and then, in the first place, quotes a number of passages from the tradition, which—I feel certain—stood in the primitive baptismal creed (*vv.* 3, 4) and contain an enumeration of the appearances of

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the Risen One: this "tradition" is then completed by reference to other appearances of Christ, and concludes with that experienced by Paul himself (*vv.* 6-8). Thus the apostle does not appeal to inspiration, but to reliable tradition and eye-witnesses. This is his proof for the fact of the resurrection. In exactly the same way the apostle proceeds in regard to the celebration of the Communion. He recites the words of institution as he "had received them from the Lord," that is, as they had been handed on to him (*1 Cor. xi. 23*).

St. John takes the same course in his Gospel. He lays weight, for some reason or other, upon the fact that blood and water flowed from Christ's side after it was pierced by the spear. He establishes this statement by the remark: "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true" (*John xix. 34, 35*). Here, too, a historical fact is proved by means of history. In the same way in *2 Peter i. 16, 17*, the transfiguration of Christ on the mountain (*Matt. xvii. 5*) is proved from the testimony of eye-witnesses. When Luke begins his Gospel with the statement that eye-witnesses had recorded the facts of the life of Christ, and that he had prepared himself to write by careful investigation (*i. 1-3*), it is clear that he, and the apostles also, knew the facts of the life of Christ not by inspiration, but by personal experience or from historical records, and claimed no other

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certainly than that so founded for the accuracy of their narratives.

This is so simple that its mere statement should bring conviction of the truth of our assertion. There is no historical narrative in the Bible which is not based either upon personal experience or upon oral or written tradition. The sources are expressly stated in some cases, as, for example, in the books of Kings and Chronicles in the Old Testament, or they can still be ascertained by critical analysis, as, for example, in the so-called five books of Moses, the Synoptic Gospels, or the Acts of the Apostles. All the more remarkable is the difference of the tone adopted by the biblical authors when the truth of their message with its religious and moral judgments is called in question. Here they demand unconditional surrender, for what they say is God's truth, and they speak this truth in the power of the Holy Ghost. Jahve Himself speaks to His prophets, and their words are therefore Jahve's words. "Only what Jahve saith unto me, that will I speak," says the prophet (1 Kings xxii. 14). "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? Jahve hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos iii. 8). "Then Jahve put forth His hand and touched my mouth; and Jahve said unto me: behold I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jer. i. 9, 10). These and similar sayings always refer to identical cases.

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Misfortune threatens, sin increases, Jahve's sign has come to pass; then the Spirit comes over the prophet, and now he interprets the situation, expresses the will of God in words, teaches men to know sin, to surrender self to God and trust in His grace.

A difference becomes apparent when we think of the New Testament. In the Old Testament the facts which the prophet interprets are less clear than in the New Testament; therefore the inspiration of the Old must be of more varied and comprehensive nature than that of the New Testament. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews ingeniously characterised this difference when he says: "God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i. 1 f.). The revelation of God comprehends in the New Testament not only facts but also all the words of Jesus, and became correspondingly simpler and more uniform. The work of interpretation is thus facilitated for the witnesses of Christ, who require less prompting to comprehension than the old prophets. The word of Jahve in the Old Testament was constantly required to complete the revelation given by facts, while in the New Testament the inspiring Spirit is required only to explain and apply the fulness of the revelation in Christ (John xvi, 13-15). Therefore in the Old Testa-

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ment revelation and inspiration tend to pass into one another, while in the New Testament the sharp distinction between the two, which we have stated, is more clearly obvious.

But at one point there is full coincidence between the Old and the New Testament. The disciples of Jesus claim the same authority for their utterances through the Spirit as did the Old Testament prophets. The Spirit of Jahve gives the same authority as the Spirit of Christ, for it is the same Spirit. The product of the inspiration of Christ's disciples is their preaching and teaching, or the lively understanding of Christ and of salvation. Paul's mode of argument when preaching the Gospel is very different from that which he employs when proving the reality of historical events. But we must consider the matter a little more minutely. Paul uses the term, the "Gospel of Christ," as meaning not the Gospel which tells of Christ, but the Gospel which goes forth from Christ; it is not "our" message, which is preached "after man," but the message of Christ in His revelation (Gal. i. 8, 11). Now the concrete Gospel as it is preached is the interpretation or application in special form of the message of Christ—which is one thing to the Jews and another to the Gentiles—it is a "making known of the mystery of the Gospel" (Eph. vi. 19), and it is for this that God gives the power or the gift of grace (Gal. ii. 8, 9). The Gospel is thus

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both the revelation given by Christ and the special understanding of this revelation. In the latter sense it is given by a special, personal gift of grace by God or, as we say, by inspiration. In this sense Paul speaks of his gospel (Rom. ii. 16), or of his understanding of the mystery of Christ (Eph. iii. 4). The Gospel as the revelation of Jesus Christ applies to the Church as such: on the other hand, the working of the Holy Spirit enables certain men to understand the fundamental elements of the Gospel of Christ, and to formulate these in such a way as to secure their efficacy. In this sense, then, we may speak of an inspiration of the Gospel, or, more accurately, of the understanding of it. This sense Paul also follows when he says of the Gospel which he has proclaimed and his readers have believed that whoever would set anything else in its place—were it even Paul himself, or an angel from heaven—let him be anathema. Very remarkable is the contrast between this certainty that despises evidence when the truth of the Gospel is in question, and the calm allegation of evidence when proof of particular facts is desired.

The same form of certainty is peculiar to the Old and New Testament authors in all cases when they give expression to religious thoughts or moral admonitions. An author never attempts to prove the Divine power of Christ or the validity of a moral demand. On the contrary, he speaks

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with a certainty based upon the assurance that he has the Spirit and believes that the working of the Spirit will also subdue his readers and hearers.

We understand, therefore, by inspiration—to sum up the matter—certain effects worked by the Spirit of God in the souls of the prophets and the first witnesses of Christ through which they were enabled to understand revelation—its facts and its words—and make it intelligible. The consciousness of these effects gave them their peculiar and immediate form of certainty with reference to the religious and moral content of revelation.

VIII

THE HISTORICAL APPEARANCE OF INSPIRATION IN CERTAIN CHARISMATA OF THE NEW TESTAMENT-TIME

AFTER we have defined the conception of inspiration, the question arises whether a phenomenon of the kind can be historically established as occurring within the period of revelation.

By way of answer to this question we can in the first place point to those passages which expressly speak of an inspiration of Holy Scripture. In 2 Timothy iii. 16 we read: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for teaching," etc. The word *theópneustos*, used in this case, is to be explained on the analogy of such expressions as *eúpnēustos* or *ápneustos*, that is, provided with good breath or with no breath. It thus does not mean "God breathing," but "provided with God's breath by God." The Scriptures are accordingly filled with God's breath or spirit. This passage refers, of course, only to the Old Testament, and says no more than that God's Spirit lives in it. As a starting-point whence the idea of inspiration may be comprehended the passage is therefore unserviceable.

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The same is true of the second passage, 2 Peter i. 20, 21. Here it is said that prophecy is not a matter of private interpretation, or due to the will of man, but that the "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This passage also does not lead us beyond the Old Testament, and says no more than that God's Spirit, and not their own spirit, moved the prophets. Thus, as to inspiration in our sense the passage makes no pronouncement whatever. We are therefore obliged to seek another point of departure. Paul says: "We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, *that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*" (1 Cor. ii. 12, 13). Here the process of inspiration becomes quite clear. The revelation with its gifts is given. But the understanding and interpretation of it comes to Paul through the teaching of the Spirit. It is thus a special capacity which is imparted to him, and precisely this capacity is inspiration. Similar cases of special gifts may, of course, be found elsewhere in the New Testament. They are the charismata, or gifts of the Spirit.

In the passage 1 Corinthians xii. 4-12 Paul gives an exhaustive account of the gifts of the Spirit. He distinguished three groups: (1) the marvellous endowment of the spiritual capacity

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of man (the word of wisdom and of knowledge). (2) The imparting of a peculiar strength of faith and of the capacity for working miracles. (3) The gift of prophecy and of the "discerning of spirits," of speaking with tongues and of the interpretation of tongues. For our purpose the second group may be put aside, as also the speaking with tongues. There thus remain four charismata, which may help us to find an explanation of inspiration, namely the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge and of prophecy, together with the "discerning of spirits." Since prophecy is conjoined with the "discerning of spirits," that is, the capacity to know the Spirit which has impelled the prophet to speak, the term "prophecy" must here, at all events, extend also to such utterances as are the product of sudden revelation, impelled solely by suggestion. Consequently 1 Corinthians xiv. 30: "If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first (who is speaking) hold his peace." From such utterances evoked by momentary excitement, the words of wisdom and of knowledge are differentiated by the fact that they include personal comprehension of the matter revealed. Thus, under certain conditions, the prophet may say what has been revealed to him at the moment, though his words may not be intelligible to himself: the possessor of wisdom or of knowledge, on the contrary, has

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gained through the Spirit an insight of his own. At the same time wisdom and knowledge are differentiated, the former implying practical judgment of life, the latter insight into the nature and connection of things; the former has thus reference rather to ethical, the latter rather to religious knowledge.

Thus in the apostolic time the Spirit of God might so touch and move a soul that it gained a marvellously clear knowledge of the religious and moral content of revelation. But this is precisely the instance which we require to find. When the Spirit produces in Paul thoughts and words which bring the revelation of God to clear and sharp expression, and make it distinct and impressive, we understand that he possessed the gifts of wisdom and of knowledge, and that the imparting of these gifts was his inspiration. A glance at the general content of Paul's Epistles will show that he either interprets and applies the revelation of Christ or considers the new life of Christendom and the significance of the Church in history. Such an epistle as that to the Romans, which, in its early parts, inclines more in the former direction, grew out of the charismata of knowledge, and an epistle like 1 Corinthians, which is intended to heal strife and to further genuine piety in the Church, is a product of the charisma of wisdom. When an Old Testament narrator discovers God's ways in history, or an evangelist

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selects from the fulness of tradition certain features of the work of Jesus so as to produce an impressive picture, the selection was not dictated by their historical sense or by their æsthetic taste, but, according to the biblical view, by the Spirit of God which endowed them with this understanding. In this connection we can speak more precisely of the charisma of knowledge or of prophecy. And in the same way the charisma of knowledge is efficacious when a psalmist in the exaltation of thanksgiving or the depth of suffering teaches men to praise God's righteousness and mercy, or when Paul from his experience of the power of Christ concludes that He is the Lord of the world. But when, on the other hand, the interconnection of the moral life is so carefully delineated as it is at the end of many epistles or in the Old Testament in many parts of the Book of Proverbs; when again Jewish Christians are taught by strong apologetic argument that from every point of view Christianity is reality where their former faith was shadow, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, then we may rightly infer the effects of the charisma of wisdom.

This point of view can be followed throughout the Old and New Testaments, and in the majority of the books—whether historical or didactic—it will be found that our views are adequate. The authors did nothing more than understand

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the revelation of God as such in deeds and words and make it intelligible. This was their inspiration. And precisely because they were able to mark and demonstrate the footprints of God in history, to teach men to feel that Jesus is the Lord of the world, to see in the Church the conquering people of God, in short, because they were able to interpret and turn to practical account the facts of history, they enabled revelation to make its way among men. He who reads the historical writings of the Bible in the spirit of pure historical criticism is sometimes tempted to wish that inspiration were absent because this influence gave historical writing a particular tendency; it conditioned the selection of the material and the purpose of the narrative. And yet this was precisely the impulse which made the biblical books, including even the historical books, intelligible and, therefore, efficacious from a religious point of view. Only by this means did the history narrated in the Bible with its words and deeds become a religious force; or in other words, only by this means did revelation become an experienced and intelligible revelation.

Thus it should now be clear that inspiration was nothing else than the imparting of the "word of wisdom" and the "word of knowledge," as also of prophecy to the witnesses of Christ as to the authors of the Old Testament. These men understood and interpreted God's revelation

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and thereby made it a historically efficacious factor. But among the sources available for attempts to deduce the meaning of inspiration, we mentioned also the charisma of prophecy. Prophecy does not merely consist in foretelling the future; the prophet is also the mouthpiece of God (Exod. iv. 16). He expresses God's truth, not always by foretelling but also by forthtelling. How far or within what limit can prophecy be made use of in this connection? One thing is at once clear: prophecy as such does not move in the same direction as wisdom and knowledge. The prophet feels himself, it may be, suddenly penetrated by an idea and is impelled to formulate this idea in a sentence, whether it be intelligible or not, whether it be suitable to his hearers or not. This means that prophecy is itself direct revelation; it directly produces new facts of revelation by introducing new words of God into history. Now if the nature of inspiration consists in interpreting the words or deeds which are the matter of revelation, prophecy as such is indeed to be characterised as revelation, but not as inspiration in our narrower significance of the word. This statement applies no less to the ecstatic or visionary words of the old prophets than to the utterances of the prophets mentioned by Paul or to the Revelation of John.

But as a rule the prophet possessed also the capacity to interpret and apply a particular

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revelation that he might have received. This is especially noticeable in the Old Testament prophets who took from such utterances of revelation the motive and the content of a preaching which was intelligible to all. When John the Baptist is overcome by the revelation that the kingdom of God was at hand, he interprets this thought by pronouncing repentance necessary as a consequence and recommending it in many concrete ways. A clear example of this case may be found in one of the post-biblical authors, the martyr-bishop, Ignatius of Antioch. He says: "In the midst of what I spoke, I cried with a great voice, the voice of God, adhere to the bishop, the presbytery and the deacons." It is a revelation that comes to him: his words show with remarkable clearness how the revelation overpowers him and intrudes upon his utterance. Now in his letters he makes continual practical use of this new thought. He shows its necessity and applies it to concrete facts; in other words, he possesses the gift of explaining and applying the revelation. It is true that the prophet did not always possess this gift or did not always make use of it. We have in the New Testament a book to which Luther's spirit could not "accommodate" itself, and his experience has been repeated by thousands before and after him. This is the Revelation of John. In a series of visions actually seen—there is no question of

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any artificial clothing of ideas in this book as in the Jewish apocalyptic literature—John sees before him the future of the Church with all its struggles to the time of the consummation. Revelation came to him in this form, but he was not inspired to interpret it and make it intelligible. Hence the book remains obscure to us; every period of Church history seeks to explain it in its own way and to interpret it, but none can boast that it has really understood and explained it. How is this disability to be explained? It may indeed be partly due to the matter, which can only be brought home to men's minds in imaginative pictures and not in connected argument, but the principal reason is the fact that the seer himself, while he was able to perceive the visions, did not receive from them the inspiration to translate them into clearly connected thoughts, and thus render them intelligible.

This example will enable us to realise the great importance of inspiration in securing the full effect of revelation. Suppose, for instance, that the apostles had seen only a few appearances of the risen Christ and had thereby received certain ideas, but that we possessed no knowledge of the picture of Christ derived from these experiences, how poor we should then be in respect of our knowledge of Christ! Our knowledge of Christ as the Lord is entirely due to that inspired insight into the historical revelation which the

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apostles possessed. It is therefore very easy to comprehend how the receivers of revelation themselves strove to gain an understanding of the revelation. Thus the prophets themselves investigated the subject matter of their prophecies (1 Peter i. 10 f.). Thus the disciples asked Jesus to expound His parables; thus an old Roman Christian, Hermas, at the end of the first century, unweariedly begs the angel accompanying him for an explanation of the visions he himself has seen. The receiver of revelation needs inspiration, otherwise he does not understand the revelation, and cannot therefore interpret it to others.

Hence the prophetic gift as such is not identical with inspiration. Nevertheless, we may associate the gift of prophecy with inspiration. The prophet as a rule not only can receive Divine suggestions, but is also capable of expressing these intelligibly as the mouthpiece of God (Exod. iv. 16). Plato had already distinguished the two faculties when he says that the sayings of the gods brought forth in ecstatic excitement are to be referred to the judgment of the "prophets" (Timæus, p. 72). So far then as the prophet is nothing more than a receiver of impulses, he is indeed a bearer of revelation, but he does not possess inspiration in our sense: so far, on the other hand, as the prophet is able to transform the received impulses into intelligible words, as were all the Old Testa-

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ment prophets who wrote, he may be spoken of as inspired. But in addition to the gift of prophecy, Paul mentions the gift of the "discerning of spirits." By these "spirits" we are to understand the conditions producing the impulse to prophecy. Now there is a particular charisma for discriminating the utterances of the prophets or judging them (1 Cor. xii. 10; xiv. 29). This consists in the capacity to grasp clearly the sense of the utterance, of the vision or symbolical action of the prophet, and to put its value to the test. He who has this gift will not be imposed upon by the ecstatic, who, for example, breaks out into the words "Jesus is anathema" (1 Cor. xii. 3). Nor will he be led into profligacy or error by the utterances of prophets. He can penetrate and comprehend the prophet's meaning and purpose. He is therefore also naturally able to make his meaning intelligible to others. So we may say that in cases when a prophet's utterance is confined to revelation, he who is gifted with the discerning of spirits completes the prophet's work, since he is able to interpret and judge the revelation. This charisma is thus upon the same plane as the charisma of wisdom and knowledge. It is also a form of inspiration, if this conception be understood in our sense, that is, as the God-given capacity to interpret the facts of revelation and express them effectively.

IX

THE PROCESS OF INSPIRATION: ITS MIRACULOUS NATURE

WE have now found the scriptural basis for our conception of inspiration. Our view is supported by the distinction between prophecy and the gift of discerning of spirits. It might indeed be objected that inspiration is nowhere more clearly to be seen than in prophetic visions or ecstasy. But such an objection places different phenomena on the same plane in a misleading manner. There is Divine revelation which consists simply in facts which a man sees: no other power than that of sight is required of man for the appreciation of such revelation, for example, in the case of miracles, historical events, etc. On the other hand, a man's capacity for hearing or feeling may be no less immediately aroused by God. In both cases there are immediate experiences of something actual, and whether this is apprehended by the eyes, or the ears, or the inward feeling is a matter of indifference. The sensations are similar and immediate, and may very well be unintelligible to him in whom they are evoked. These events, therefore, form one group upon the same plane; in them is accomplished God's revelation. Hence it is perfectly

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clear that prophecy considered as a particular charisma brings to man something new, which is just as real as the seeing of any actual events.

But if Holy Scripture is to be explained as originated by the Spirit of God, the processes as yet mentioned are inadequate to account for the result, or at least they cover only certain parts of Scripture. Holy Scripture interprets the purpose and meaning of the facts which form revelation. In this sense it is a report and yet a part of revelation, as we have already recognised. But if the peculiarity and the specific significance of Holy Scripture consists precisely in this, its Divine origin is clearly not established by saying that the facts and words which it relates come from God. We must go a step further and say that the comprehension of those facts and words was caused in definite men through the Spirit operative in those facts; for this power of comprehension is no less a special feature in Scripture than the facts which provide revelation. As it is this power of comprehension which unfolds the special character of the Scriptures, the communication of this power can only be described as inspiration. It is at the same time quite obvious that the several processes by which inspiration is effected are as closely interconnected as they are clearly distinct from the processes of revelation.

Thus the "word of wisdom," the "word

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of knowledge " and prophecy, together with the "discerning of spirits," form a coherent whole. And the spiritual processes thus expressed we call inspiration. From the nature of the case these processes occurred without any specific difference, whether the possessor of the charisma taught orally or whether he wrote. Inspiration, therefore, must not be regarded as a temporary exaltation suddenly overpowering a man engaged in writing—there is no evidence to support any such conclusion—but as a permanent condition or an extension and deepening of knowledge. Now these three gifts of the Spirit with which we are here concerned are so interconnected that one may assume them to have been frequently united in the same individual. For instance, this was doubtless the case with a man like Paul. But this union of gifts was not necessarily a regular occurrence; one gift may frequently have outweighed another so far in an individual that his spiritual power was designated by the name of the gift which he possessed in special measure. The difference between practical power and theoretical capacity which so often characterises the natural talents of men doubtless held good in the spiritual sphere also. It is true that the principal features which we claimed for inspiration were soon united in the type of the Spirit-gifted "teacher": the "teacher" and the "prophet" are the bearers of the Spirit

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in later times. But this fact does not invalidate the distinction already recognised. We have no occasion to assume that even the authors of the Old and New Testaments were endowed with all three charismata—Justin Martyr, so early as the second century, gives a similar opinion (Dial. 87); one of these charismata was quite sufficient to qualify them for their office. We are also at liberty to suppose that the limitations of some New Testament writings, which Luther felt so strongly, were partly due to the preponderance of particular charismata in the writers. ✕

We have thus gained a clear and definite conception of inspiration, and have shown its historical foundation. Now it is of interest to discuss the further question whether and how far we can describe the psychological process of inspiration.

Inspiration is an endowment or capacity imparted to man. This endowment is not innate or natural, nor was it by any means common to all Christians, but those who possessed it experienced it as a marvellous effect of the operation of the Divine Spirit. Those who were inspired gained a penetrating insight into the facts and thoughts of revelation, and were impelled to hand on their knowledge to others. This insight was not the outcome of deliberate a priori reasoning, but was an enlightenment from above. They felt that they must think and speak as they did, for it

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was "given" them. "Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me. For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me" (1 Cor. ix. 16, 17). These words of Paul show excellently how the inspired person is not only filled with new knowledge, but also feels a strong impulse to impart it. As the understanding of revelation dawned upon him through a necessity operative from outside, so also he felt the given impulse to proclaim it.

How were these conditions produced? It seems to me that in the first place we may probably assume a certain psychological predisposition. It is not the dull spirits or the blind matter-of-fact natures that God chooses as servants of His revelation, but men capable of strong feeling or equipped with the practical power of rapidly comprehending a situation in all its bearings. They are then endowed with the charisma corresponding to any one of these tendencies that they may exhibit. Everyone who studies Paul, for example, is astounded at the wide extent of his natural talents. Dialectical acumen is accompanied by a rare power of intuition, and the capacity for deep feeling by an inflexible will. Again, in the case of John, we find a spiritual disposition naturally inclined to contemplation of his Master and to see visions, while he was

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also capable of practical concentration of thought and sure judgment. This natural endowment afforded the foundation for the imparting of charismatic endowment. Power to realise both the grandeur and the necessities of life, readiness to receive and the impulse to give were united in the spiritual disposition of such men, and made them capable of becoming God's witnesses in insight and power. They were in a position to sympathise with all the misery of sin and, on the other hand, to display in its simple outlines a clear and comprehensive picture of God's working by grace.

But whatever stress may be laid upon psychological predisposition, it was not, according to the clear consciousness of these men, the charisma that had come to them. The charisma was something awakened in them by God, it was the effect of His Spirit and not of theirs. How, then, can the possession of this gift have come about? All deep and clear comprehension of any object of thought is the product of a vigorous interaction between the soul and the object of thought. This interaction may have its starting-point in the soul or in the object. The soul may seek the object or the object enter into the soul. The process may be a voluntary and conscious act of learning, or it may be an excitement of the soul by the power of the object. Thus knowledge and understanding are produced. It

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is clear that we are concerned with the second of these possibilities. The object is brought into touch with a man, and so penetrates and stirs his soul that all his natural capacities are aroused to master the understanding of the object. But in this case it is no mere inanimate object which stirs the man, but a living and operative factor: God's Spirit streams forth from it and enters the soul. Now this happens in all Christians in the process of regeneration or conversion. But while in this process human knowledge as a rule gains but a slow comprehension of the objects of which a man becomes conscious through immediate experience, the process of inspiration is to be considered as a quick and comprehensive excitement of the power of knowledge. In the case of the converted man knowledge grows gradually and remains, in some cases on a comparatively low level; it may remain purely individual, one-sided and paradoxical. The converted man is often incapable of explaining the nature of his experience to others, and even less capable of formulating a doctrine to determine and influence the whole Church or decide the course of a long series of historical development. Infinite misfortune and mischief may arise when converts who have not reached the full measure of Christian knowledge attempt to impose their ideas upon the life of historical communities!



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Far more difficult was the position of the spiritual leaders of the first Christian generation than that of the leaders of to-day! The latter have to deal with knowledge given and formulated, and the power of historical tradition of itself corrects the partiality and the errors of their knowledge and supplies its deficiencies. The apostles and the Old Testament authors, on the contrary, were confronted with the task of transforming a great and powerful stream of life for the first time into clear and intelligible, comprehensive and effective ideas and words. By their efforts to attain this purpose the apostles and their companions laid the foundation-stone of the Church, and thereby determined its spiritual direction and extent. They succeeded in this gigantic task, as the history of Christianity shows. Their definitions and formulæ have become and remained efficacious as standard and exhaustive expression of the Divine revelation. Through this their knowledge they became, in fact, the foundation of the Church, and what they loosed or bound, that is, allowed or forbade, attained Divine power and validity (Matt. xvi. 18, 19). They succeeded, in fact, without the help of pre-existing tradition, in grasping the nature and consequences of the revelation which they had experienced and in coining simple and concrete forms of expression with which to explain their conclusions. And this is all the more remarkable

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as they did not think and write with the intention of producing formulæ for all times and circumstances, but were obliged to give expression to the eternal truth to meet practical situations and particular needs.

Thus the knowledge which every Christian formulates for himself from his experience of the revelation-working of God is an analogy, but only an analogy to the inspiration of the biblical authors. Before their eyes lay the great facts of a new world in which God's sovereign will alone rules for the redemption of the old lost world. But this will, or His Spirit, worked with such intensity upon their souls that they beheld immediately and clearly the outlines and the possibilities of the new world and its redemptive power over the old world. The greater the grace and the sorer the need, the stronger the impulse in the soul to seek the new knowledge and to find adequate forms for its expression as the means of leading men out of the world of sin into the world of grace. Thus we may conceive the psychological process of inspiration. The Spirit of God lays hold upon the soul with great power and at the most opportune moment, when its receptivity for intuitive knowledge is highest; the soul thereby immediately gains knowledge intuitively together with the impulse to express it. The acquisition of this knowledge is not a process comparable with the slow descent of

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the sunbeams from the mountain heights to the depths of the ravines: it is like the lightning flash that in one moment lights up both the summits and the deepest valleys. Thus through the operation of the Spirit of God the soul acquires knowledge of the world where salvation may be found, and this knowledge is given, not gradually acquired like other knowledge.

Precisely in this fact consists the miraculous character of inspiration. Analogies may help us to a clearer conception of its nature, but the marvel of the process remains unshaken. The acquisition of knowledge by a man converted has already been noted as an analogy to the point. We may now as a further analogy point to the unconscious and involuntary origin of intuitive views and judgments. The former analogy demonstrates the fact that the inspired knowledge possesses a definite content, the latter how this comes to pass. The former analogy was limited by the fact that inspiration is not a gradual progress to knowledge. The latter finds its limits in that this intuition arising in a man appears as an effect of the revelation of God. Moreover, this judgment is confirmed by the extent and significance of this knowledge. Inspiration is accordingly the miraculous imparting of the understanding of revelation. We say "miraculous imparting," although we saw that inspiration is accomplished after the analogy of the other

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movements of the soul. Since God does not through miracle overthrow the natural order of events, but uses these to produce a particular effect willed by Him, in which man shall become conscious of His presence, so also the psychological form of inspiration is no proof that its nature was not miraculous. It was the soul of the inspired man which received the new knowledge in a special manner, and at the same time felt that this knowledge was caused by God and was miraculous.

Inspiration, as we have learned to know it, was given for practical purposes. When a man can clearly distinguish salvation and its opposite, he experiences also the impulse to further the efficacy of salvation. It is here that the operation of the Spirit fulfils itself. Hence God promises Moses and Aaron help in their speech (Exod. iv. 15), and Jesus tells the disciples that the Spirit shall speak in them (Matt. x. 20). Hence Paul spoke not only of knowledge and wisdom, but of the "*word* of knowledge" and of "*wisdom*" which God gives to man. Now it is self-evident that this gift was not operative in the leading men of the apostolic or prophetic time only when they wrote, but in their whole work upon the Churches. It is self-evident that the gift of knowledge or of wisdom in Paul was active in precisely the same manner when he preached at Corinth as when he wrote his Epistle to the

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Corinthians. And certainly the Spirit of inspiration guided those oldest missionaries who selected from the life of Jesus such matter as was suitable for their purposes, or devised definite forms of teaching as a means of expressing Christian conviction in the same way as it guided our evangelists, who composed their books on the basis of that material. So again it guided the authors of the New Testament Epistles whose admonitions, for the most part, are closely connected with these forms. But then it may be said that the oral as well as the written testimony of the first witnesses of Christ was similarly inspired or penetrated by the Spirit of knowledge and of wisdom. Not only did the Holy Scriptures arise under the influence of this Spirit, but also those old traditions which are lost to us (in the so-called Apostles' Creed, especially in the second article, fragments of them are preserved), but which in the second century had a great significance for the Church.

Now if we reflect that Paul the preacher was not less inspired than Paul the Epistle-writer, we may well ask whether inspiration, as we regard it, is to be understood as an event happening once or as a series of events following each other and completing each other. Inspiration arose, as we saw, under the influence of definite occasions. We are bound to suppose that the nature of those occasions varied in kind or in degree, and that so

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far as variation took place inspiration became a complex of different actions. This we may conclude, for example, from the fact that an imparting of "wisdom" may very well be occasioned, under suitable conditions, by knowledge formerly attained. The natural predisposition for the reception of the charisma in question lies dormant in such a case till the Spirit of God sets it in motion by making use of a presented occasion. The case of the incestuous person in Corinth, or the peculiar modification of the Jewish-Christian standpoint in the heretics of Colossæ, leads to new inspirations, since wisdom and knowledge call forth new judgments in the soul of Paul. But this fact implies a further step. Fresh occasions, we may now say, provide an opening for fresh inspirations. Or the Spirit in revelation becomes operative in the soul, so that it again through intuitive knowledge can thoroughly grasp a particular difficulty, and can find the suitable solution with instinctive certainty. Naturally, however, the character of this new knowledge is particularly determined by the charismatic enlightenment already given to the soul, which cannot forthwith disappear when once given. For instance, so soon as Paul recognised through inspiration that Christ the Lord penetrates and guides us as a heavenly energy, so that we are in Him and He in us, he gained a piece of knowledge which indeed dawned on him as an intuition,

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but which he and his hearers or readers naturally think over at length, or consciously adopt. Thus he attains acquired knowledge of this matter. Now if a new problem arises—for instance, that a man could be a follower of Christ only by following the philosophically interpreted law and striving after an ascetic, angelic holiness—the answer is, for the most part, given to the apostle by means of the knowledge he has already gained : because Christ the Lord is in our hearts, present and operative, there is no need of statutory laws. But on such occasions inspiration or intuitive knowledge is also possible, if such ideas occur to him as that the law is nailed to Christ's cross, or that God, who once revealed Himself through angels, had now put off these as one puts off a garment, in order henceforth to work only in Christ (Col. ii. 14, 15). Thus the following inspiration completes the foregoing, but at the same time rests upon it.

Thus the question propounded above is answered. Inspiration is completed, as a matter of fact, by a number of processes. Its completion is conditioned in the first place by its varied nature—it may appear as wisdom, knowledge, etc.—and also by the fact that previously acquired knowledge must be extended and deepened to meet fresh exigencies. In the former case there is thus present a qualitative, in the latter a more quantitative variety.

X

PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE INSPIRED MIND: ACQUIRED AND INSPIRED, NATURAL AND INSPIRED KNOWLEDGE: NATURAL MEANS OF EXPRESSION UTILISED BY THE INSPIRED MIND: THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTIGATION FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGION

THE considerations which we have brought forward are of particular importance to our knowledge of the concrete consciousness of the inspired authors. It is, in fact, antecedently probable that in the light of these presuppositions, the attempts to support theories in themselves unnatural, and inconsistent with the process of literary composition, will collapse incontinently, though the old theories of inspiration necessitated their acceptance.

We shall now trace the process by which the contents of an inspired man's religious consciousness originated. He first gained a realisation of the different elements of revelation, historical and didactic. Then he experienced the subduing and redemptive power of God's Spirit which shows itself operative in revelation. This feeling forced

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him to consider and think over these spiritual experiences. His meditations were aided by the fact that his will became gradually accustomed to accept the guidance of God's will, which he had experienced as operative within himself, while this change in his life also afforded him feelings of pleasure and satisfaction. But now this normal Christian process of development is suddenly interrupted and modified. The deep emotion aroused in the soul by the experience of the operative presence of God is further stimulated by a problem forced on the soul by the practical needs of other souls : for example, what incidents from the life of Christ should be imparted to the Jews and what to the heathen ? In what formulæ are His nature and working to be comprised ? Which are the chief gifts of the Holy Spirit ? What are the baptized to do so long as they live in the world, etc. ? Or there are particular questions upon individual difficulties of doctrine or upon moral problems arising out of corporate Church life. The soul that is stirred in this way to influence others and thus to become responsible for them, then receives the answer suddenly and instantaneously from the contemplation of the revelation and of the subject of inquiry. By intuition the thinker learns so to grasp the nature of the matter that he at the same time finds the suitable and efficacious expression for it. But this acquisition is given to him ; he feels it as

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an effect caused by God ; his new insight has for him Divine authority, for the Spirit operative in revelation has given it to him.

This process has been more precisely described above. This new knowledge is now united to the religious knowledge formerly acquired, and stimulates it, as it is stimulated by it. The inspired man connects his acquired knowledge with his intuitive or inspired knowledge. In consequence the former is accelerated and enriched, the latter becomes a fast and sure possession of the soul. This inward process naturally advances by slow degrees, and it is impossible, therefore, for the soul straightway to amalgamate the inspired knowledge with its acquired knowledge : on the contrary, the latter usually lags behind the former, as indeed the sinful nature of the man in question would suggest. But, nevertheless, this process of assimilation takes place continuously in the soul ; the inspired person makes the inspired knowledge the object of his reflection, seeks to find reasons for it and sets it in relation to his other knowledge. By the latter is meant, in the first place, religious knowledge, but also purely natural, worldly knowledge. Naturally, too, inspired men attempted to compare their new knowledge with their picture of the world and of the soul, with their pre-Christian religious and theological ideas, or to relate the two systems to each other. This is no less true of the Old

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Testament than of the New Testament authors. Anyone who learns to appreciate this point of view will find it frequently confirmed by the facts of Scripture. The richer and more comprehensive the natural faculties of an inspired person, the stronger will be his endeavour to bring the new-won intuitive knowledge into connection with the ideas he has already established. For the New Testament authors the whole of the inspired knowledge of the Old Testament men had become acquired spiritual knowledge, which was very closely connected with the New Testament ideas through the thought that the new covenant had at length transformed the prophecies and types of the old covenant into effective reality. Besides this there were the scientific method of rabbinical criticism and the special interpretation which later Judaism impressed upon the Old Testament ideas. We can see in the case of a mighty spirit like Paul how all these impulses were aroused by the new knowledge which the Spirit had awaked in him. Everywhere he sees fulfilments of the Old Testament, he makes use of the interpretation of the School, and the strain of Jewish speculation is clearly recognisable, for example, in his picture of the future. But all this is subordinate to the great crowning thought that Christ is the Lord and the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 17).

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When a man possessed of such spiritual knowledge was confronted by new problems, naturally his first thought was whether he could master them out of his former knowledge. The longer he remained under the influences of inspiration, that is, the greater the store of knowledge which he gained, the sooner must he have succeeded in finding a solution by means of reflection, which solution, since it depended on former inspired knowledge, was invested with authoritative validity for his own consciousness. New problems could thus find their solution by means of deductions from former knowledge—inspirations or Old Testament ideas and ideas common to Christians. Or they could occasion fresh inspirations which eventually brought confirmation of the conclusions gained by personal reflection, or the inspirations were brought nearer to the readers by such conclusions. If we read, for instance, Romans ix.-ii, or i Corinthians xv., from this point of view, we shall see how conclusions drawn from Old Testament passages or from fundamental principles of the New Testament proclamation enable the author to impress more forcibly upon himself and his readers the new insight which he has gained through inspiration or intuition.

It is very instructive to examine the New Testament Epistles while keeping these ideas in view. The authors attain a comparatively wide

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range of ideas by logical deduction from given thoughts or by application of general knowledge to particular cases. Now it may seem that this whole field should be regarded only as a product of natural thinking and as falling outside of the limits of inspiration. But so to judge would be to overlook two things. Firstly these thoughts are obvious conclusions deduced from inspired fundamental knowledge, and secondly, since the authors had appropriated that inspired knowledge, they were also subjectively guided by it in their mode of thinking. Besides these there is also a third point, namely, that such logical conclusions themselves not seldom represent simply the suitable form of expression for ideas acquired through inspiration or intuition.

But it must be said that this mode of expression sometimes raises difficulties in the way of our historical outlook. The question arises whether the inspired author was correct in his conclusions, or whether his use of Old Testament proof is justifiable, or whether his quotations from contemporary Jewish theological or philosophical thinkers invest them with the authority of the Holy Spirit. It is clear that our historical sense is bound to take due account of differences in the biblical books. In the first place there can be no doubt that the biblical authors could certainly draw conclusions intrinsically false from inspired truths. From the nature of the case, it is true,

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false inferences concerning salvation on the part of men who were equipped with special clarity of vision for the fundamental truths of salvation are not very probable. In reality I do not believe that in any New Testament writing an erroneous, anti-Christian view or conception can be proved, however widely the formulations of its thoughts may deviate. Paul's teaching with regard to the righteousness attainable by Christians differs from that of James (ii. 21 ff.) and of John (1 John iii. 7). But on both sides Christian ideas are represented. One is ready to predicate righteousness of a man when he in faith becomes certain of the first effects of God's operation, while the others, on the contrary, apply this predicate only when a man, under Divine influence, acts in accordance with God; yet either view is justified according to the intention of the authors and the need of the readers. It would be sheer sectarianism for us to shut our eyes to the good Christian meaning of the teaching of James because we have decided for the Pauline form of statement. In a theological "system" scientifically constructed, such ambiguities are naturally to be avoided; in life they will always occur. Similarly, we cannot accuse Paul, for instance, of error, because he rejected the Old Testament law on the ground of his particular experience of salvation, while Jesus, as we know, held His work to be a fulfilling

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of the law (Matt. v. 17). The thought that Christianity completes the moral tendency of the Old Testament law stands in no contradiction to Paul's idea that the law never had power to make men good, but that righteousness can be attained only through the Gospel or the Spirit. Both views are equally right and genuinely Christian.

Thus we cannot perceive errors in the understanding of Christianity, that is, deviations from the Christian principle, in the New Testament books. With reference to the Old Testament, it must be remembered that in it different stages of religious evolution lie side by side, and that the logical development of the legal religion is superseded for the Christian consciousness by the religion of redemption. Such conceptions as are implied by the detailed elaboration of the principle of retributive justice, or the prayer for the punishment of Godless enemies, which seem so foreign to us, are to be understood as the inevitable outcome of the legal religion. From the standpoint even of legal religion, it is true, applications of the principle, which, for example, occur in the damnatory Psalms, cannot be always regarded as inwardly justified. Personal passion here drove the authors to results which did not proceed from the Spirit.

Thus, although we can find no errors of teaching in the New Testament, upon other matters the authors were naturally by no means infallible.

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We have already seen that they were liable to error upon historical points, and that the methods of biblical exegesis which led them to find the New Testament in the Old, were not by any means always tenable (see above, p. 25 ff.). But now, in addition to this, we have to consider the use of Jewish theology and philosophy in the elucidation of the Christian truths. It is self-evident that this Jewish science as such can claim no special authority, but it is true also that it need not be in itself "wrong." The New Testament writers not only shared the current views of nature's working, and the whole theory about spirits then common, but they also accepted the allegories—many of them primitive—of the end of the world and the ideas of Jewish metaphysics, according to which everything earthly pre-exists in heaven. This circle of ideas was for them the frame in which they placed the new picture of Christianity; and this frame was broken only where it would have crushed the picture. Thus they abandoned the Jewish view of the Messiah in its entirety, for the coming of Christ had demonstrated its falsity. On the other hand men continued to speak of the last great catastrophes of the world's history in the old traditional imagery, with the modification that Christ Himself was the figure to Whom the signs of the end pointed and Who was to perform the last judgment. Thus the old imagery was

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retained—what were men to set in its place?—yet it had gained an entirely new content by becoming the light illuminating the path of the returning Son of Man, and proclaiming His coming. Or to cite another example, men fancied, on the ground of the Jewish metaphysical theory of pre-existence, that not only Christ, the heavenly spiritual Lord, was pre-existent—that is, of course, self-evident—but also the man Jesus (1 Cor. xv. 47). In similar accordance with Jewish theory, the congregation of the elect, or the Church, was represented as pre-existing in heaven (Gal. iv. 26; Rev. iii. 12; xxi. 2; Heb. xii. 22). These ideas are difficult for us to understand, because they do not agree with the scientific presuppositions of modern thought. But when we meet with these and similar remnants of past science we are not obliged to regard this science as inspired, but merely to understand what religious view the authors in question wished to express by this means. Obviously, nothing more is implied than that God, in His infinite knowledge and power, has predetermined the course of all things from eternity. This deeply religious thought—it includes predestination—finds expression in that early scientific formula. The idea has obviously an authoritative significance for ourselves; but this significance does not extend to the manner of its expression, which is temporary and conditioned, for the reason that

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it was formed by thinkers of Jewish nationality. The fact that the biblical authors used popular forms of expression in order to make their arguments intelligible may have been a part of inspired "wisdom," but these forms did not therefore themselves become a part of the revelation.

These observations will apply to any of the other means of expression inevitably employed by writers whose philosophy was that of the old world. The mythological element especially must here be considered. It is by no means seldom to be found, particularly in the Old Testament. Recent researches in the history of religion rightly lay great stress on the discovery and explanation of this element. Without question the understanding of many an obscure passage will be furthered by this work. Its task, if my view is correct, is threefold. In the first place, close examination of other religions will guide us to a clearer and, if we may so say, to a more material and literal understanding of biblical ideas. We are accustomed to think in abstract conceptions, and this tendency to abstraction may, like the arms of an octopus, encircle the concrete ideas of Scripture to drain and rob them of their vitality. "To be in Christ" is for us, as a rule, quite as pale and as abstract a picture as, for example, the usage "in Christ's name," whereas in biblical times both of these formulæ expressed strong reality or the real presence of Christ. But

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these ideas are not removed from our religious scope by the recognition of this fact, which should rather urge us to coin new and appropriate expressions in our language for the ideas in question. The history of religion when considered in this way can become a valuable means for bringing theology and the Church nearer to the strong experiences of old. Such a strengthening of the sense of Christ's presence in our own lives is especially desirable, in view of the grievous extent to which this sense has grown dim.

In the second place it must be remembered that here, as everywhere, analogy may endanger our prospects of learning the special nature of the object under our consideration, for it is always easier to find "resemblances" than to recognise the specific nature of a phenomenon. The inquirer who keeps this possibility in view will be led precisely by comparison of primitive Christian thought with other religious forms to recognise the special and exalted character of the ideas of revelation. Compare, for instance, for this purpose, the Jewish picture of the Messiah in the Book of Enoch or in the Apocalypse of Baruch or Ezra with the Christology of Paul. So again a comparison of the biblical story of creation with the Babylonian creation-myth will enable us to realise—precisely because the former is dependent on the latter—how entirely differently the idea of creation was conceived by Israelitish

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piety and by Semitic heathenism. The differences are far greater than the resemblances, for the fundamental point of view is totally different.¹

In the third place account must be taken of the fact that the mythological element also made its way into the language and the circle of ideas of the Bible. The primæval dragon-myth is adduced as shining through in the creation story no less than as lingering in the Revelation of John, where the dragon wishes to swallow the woman with her child. This knowledge too is certainly valuable, for it gives us a better understanding of such points in the biblical narratives. But as a whole it is of comparatively little use for the comprehension of the fundamental thoughts of revelation. Every language and civilisation contains a great number of such mythical survivals which do not in any way prove the perpetuation of myth. When we, for instance, characterise a hero as a St. George slaying the dragon, or speak of servants of Bacchus or Venus or of "brothers in Apollo," or set up statues of Zeus or Hermes in our houses, our religious attitude towards these figures of the gods and myths remains unchanged. But at the same time the finer points of our language and its allusions will be unintelligible to anyone who has no knowledge

¹ Cf. E. Sellin, *Die biblische Urgeschichte*, in part xi, 1st series of the *biblische Zeit-und Streitfragen*. S. Oettli, *Die Autorität des Alten Testaments für den Christen*, *ibid.* part ii, 2nd series.

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of these myths. In exactly the same way biblical figures or expressions are current in the language ; but he who uses them does not thereby profess the biblical faith. People may speak, for example, of an "unbelieving Thomas," or say that something is "as sure as the Amen in the Church"; but we cannot infer that they read or believe the Scriptures, or that they are regular in attendance at Church. In this sense perhaps the dragon-myth continued to exist in the Bible, as of course it still lingers in our language. Hence it is necessary to apply strict tests to the biblical uses of myths in order to ascertain their intention. Such usage will appear to be either a mere form of words, or an integral part of the ancient theory of existence. But at all events—and this is the important point here—such myths are never a part of revelation nor are they original elements of specifically Christian knowledge. To return to the starting-point of these considerations, the spiritual life of an inspired man was certainly conditioned by his environment and by the way of thinking and speaking which this environment imposed upon him. But whatever the importance of these influences for the understanding of his individual productions, it in no way annuls or distorts the knowledge of Christianity gained through the Spirit.

XI

INSPIRATION AND THE REALITY OF THE FACTS OF REVELATION

THIS attempt to depict the spiritual consciousness of an inspired person leads us back to a question already discussed. We saw that the inspired person received by way of tradition or of personal experience knowledge of the facts and words of revelation. Inspiration consisted in the comprehension and interpretation of these facts and words. But this view seems to base the reality of the facts and words of the direct revelation upon the uncertain ground of human tradition. However magnificent the interpretations of the inspired authors, their beauty is of little account if the facts and utterances to which they refer are not real. However profound the interpretations of a text, what use are they if the text itself is spurious and worthless? Now we have recognised that inspiration can never impart a knowledge of facts. It is absurd to suppose that anyone should be inspired with the knowledge that Jesus spoke a word on this or that occasion, or that He rose from the dead on the third day, for it is not objective facts of knowledge but recognition of their meaning that inspiration

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produces. Inspiration was an effect of the operation of the Spirit of God, through which a man learned to understand the nature of facts given him. Hence it follows that so far as inspired knowledge can be gained from facts or words, the reality of these facts and words is thereby guaranteed. If God enables man to recognise the meaning of certain particular facts, these facts must also be caused by God. The more paradoxical and miraculous are the facts, the more certainly is this conclusion valid. If the apostles therefore gained inspired knowledge from the fact of the resurrection of Christ through God's Spirit, then the actuality of the resurrection is confirmed for everyone who feels the witness of the Spirit in the word of the Bible. If the words of Jesus or the Divine oracles spoken by the prophets have become the subject of inspired comprehension, then their reality is demonstrated for the religious point of view.

So much should now be clear. When God has so organised revelation that through it inspiration to understand it is given to mankind, naturally all that becomes the object of such inspired knowledge is shown to be Divine revelation and historical reality. The Spirit who gives inspiration is also the creator of revelation, since inspiration is nothing more than a means contained in revelation for making the latter effective throughout the world. Thus in so far as inspired

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knowledge proceeds from a fact or from a word, this fact or this word is shown to be part of the Divine revelation. Conversely it is to be assumed that false traditions cannot at once be recognised as such; yet they might well form part of the outer circle of an inspired writer's thoughts, or might not bring forth any knowledge in him. When an inspired man derives ideas from a word of the Lord, such as the saying only once recorded, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 35), the Christian meaning of this saying is guaranteed, and when an inspired author rejects certain historical traditions as vain (e.g. Col. ii. 8; Titus iii. 9), the rejection shows that they remained foreign to him and were in contradiction to the Spirit that moved him, that is, that they either are unhistorical or at any rate cannot be part of revelation. The more central the position of a fact or an idea, and the deeper and more comprehensive the uses of it by the biblical authors, the more certainly may we claim it as part of the historical revelation of God. Regarded in this way, such facts as the miraculous deliverance of Israel from Egypt, or the resurrection of Christ, and such ideas as those of the prophets upon the future sovereignty of God, or those of Jesus on the realisation of the sovereignty of God through Him, are to be reckoned among the absolutely clear and certain elements of the revelation-history.

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One limitation, however, must be noted to which this line of argument is subject. When we speak of a confirmation of the reality of facts and words of history through inspired knowledge, we naturally do not keep in mind each particular historical feature of tradition in all its minuter details, for it is impossible to point to inspired thoughts in connection with each of these details. Nor do we consider that the verbal accuracy of a text can thus be proved or that the originality of one form of tradition can be sustained against another form. No one can decide, for example, from this standpoint, whether and how the records of the resurrection in the four Gospels are to be harmonised or whether the beatitudes and the Lord's prayer in Matthew or Luke are preserved in their form as spoken (cf. Matt. v. 3-10 with Luke vi. 20-22, and Matt. vi. 9-13 with Luke xi. 2-4). In such questions scientific considerations are not abrogated and religious criteria may prove inadequate. On the other hand these criteria are fully adequate, as we have shown, to produce certainty of the reality of the great facts of salvation and the thoughts of revelation. With these latter religion is concerned rather than with problems of historical criticism.

XII

RETROSPECT. REVELATION AND SPIRITUAL HISTORY IN GENERAL: TESTING OF THE RELIGIOUS-HISTORICAL VIEW. THE BIBLE AND INSPIRATION: THE INSPIRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WRITINGS. CON- CLUSION

WE are near the end of our considerations. The question that has occupied us may be briefly formulated. From a realm of thought comprised in a great literary monument of the past miraculous effects continuously proceed. The question is whether this fact can be explained. In the first place the fact of revelation offered itself as an explanation of the question. God works in this realm of thought, because He Himself has introduced it into the history of mankind through miraculous deeds and words as the means of subduing mankind to His redemptive sovereignty. The eternal will of God thus becomes historically operative in the facts and ideas of revelation. The same thought may be expressed otherwise, from the standpoint of human experience. In this case we say that we experience in these thoughts the redemptive sovereignty of God which reveals itself by us and in us, and on that account we are

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certain that the history which brought forth this complex of ideas is a history of salvation caused by God.

So we come to the knowledge of Divine revelation as a historical fact. An objection of some weight might be made at this point. It is not only, it might be said, from the small section of history which we call the history of salvation, but from the whole stream of historical evolution that mankind derives its consciousness of God and of His working. In other words, the true revelation is to be found in history as the evolution of the human spirit, and not merely in the history of definite phases of the evolution of the Jewish people. This statement is based upon arguments demonstrating the coherence of the old Israelitish and old Christian thoughts with the whole of the early history of religion. Further, it is pointed out how in connection with the philosophical evolution of the human spirit the general religious view has also changed. Think only of the significance to the understanding of religion of such men as Augustine and the great theologians of the Middle Ages, of Luther and Schleiermacher, of Kant and Hegel, of the new view of the world and the modern historical method of thought. How rich and many-sided revelation thus becomes! Nothing in history is then profane or useless; all is effected by the Spirit of God, and all knowledge of the human

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spirit is a revelation of the Godhead. In the transitory process of development, the Spirit gradually grasps the eternal being. History is of God, and therefore in it everywhere is God.

Recent theories of the history of religion have brought these ideas into prominence; with the help of new means of research they revivify Hegel's great conceptions. But here, too, Christ is to remain the centre of history. Every beam of light which illuminated the old world is focussed in Him, and all the light that has lightened the world after Him came forth from Him. Thus Christ seems to become not merely a miracle in history, but the miracle of history, not less but greater. Such is the conclusion desired.

Nevertheless, this point of view is, in general, open to the most serious objections. One fact, it is true, must be recognised at the outset, viz. that the current view of the Church not seldom makes the mistake of isolating revelation in the stream of history, and regarding it not as part of the stream but as a rocky island within it. The matter is represented as if the relations of the non-Christian and extra-Israelite history of religion to Christianity were purely negative, and as if the history of Christian thought from the end of the first century to the beginning of the sixteenth was a distortion of the Christian religion by foreign elements, a "Hellenising" of Christianity. In the face of this view, it must

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be strongly emphasised that the spirit of human search and struggle has at all times endeavoured to secure the knowledge and the satisfaction which revelation offers. This striving has not been in vain, for it prepared the human spirit both negatively and positively for the reception of revelation. And in the same way the spiritual evolution after Christ so deepened and raised the spiritual life of mankind as to make it capable of an ever wider and profounder comprehension of Christian ideas. Regarded in this light the history of culture and science has surely not estranged us from Christianity—as might appear in the struggle of daily life—but has roused a more delicate sense of need, a profounder spirit of inquiry and a more manifold interest which enable us for the first time fully to experience and understand the riches and the inner power of Christianity. The history of mankind is surely more than a history of aberration—however many “strong delusions” may have arisen in it; it is a history of progress to Christianity and of progress from Christianity to eternal consummation. Over these wide fields and devious paths also the light of the Word which was in the beginning has shone, and the will of the Lord ruled, Who is the Alpha and Omega of the world’s history. He who believes on Him sees His footprints even in the foaming waves of the world’s evolution, and hears His voice in the raging tumult of the intellectual con-

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flict ; he feels too in the rise and fall of intellectual systems the eternal will, which has become Lord of his heart.

But this recognition of the effects of God's operation in the whole of history by no means implies that this history is in all points a revelation of God. And that is exactly the problem here. To make Christ the revealer of God and at the same time to regard the history of the other religions as revelation is to produce ultimately utter confusion. In reality there are but two alternatives : either God reveals Himself in Christ and in the history which finds its goal in Him, or revelation arises from the development of the human intellectual life and arises so that through this development man comes to an ever clearer consciousness of God. In the former case certain particular events arouse the human spirit to a consciousness of God, in the latter the consciousness of God is evoked by the general progress of the world's history. In the one case the revelation in history is objective, in the other the evolution of the human spirit as such is the revelation. But these two possibilities cannot be so united as to fall under the general term "revelation." They are, indeed, mutually exclusive. Either Christ is the revealer of God, in which case the evolution of the human spirit is conducive merely to the reception and appropriation of revelation ; or

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this evolution itself is the revelation ; then Christ is only one in the series of leading minds who have disclosed Divine thoughts to man, in which case we have no right to speak of a real objective revelation. For according to this conception the spirit of man gradually and by dint of reflection, abstracts from the contemplation of the world the Divine thought as a means to the "interpretation" of the world. It is man who finds God, because he seeks Him ; others will say this seeking makes God. But one point is clear : there can be no question of revelation in the real sense. Hence the proposition that Christ reveals God to us only obscures the situation. If we understand "revelation" in the real sense, we exclude the revelation which is said to be present in the whole of history : if "revelation" is understood in the sense of the natural progress of human evolution, Christ is then only one of a long series of seekers after God, and it is impossible to find any justification of His claim to be the revealer of God.

We shall thus be warranted in putting aside this discrepant and confused view. There is no necessity to repeat here why we are convinced that God becomes manifest in the so-called salvation-history. This conviction rests on the experience that the personal will of God is felt by us in the system of thought which constitutes Christianity, as subduing and sanctifying ourselves. There-

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fore we name this system together with the history out of which it grows the revelation of God. The religious experience confirms the historical testimony of the first propounders of these ideas. Here and only here we learn to know God, because here the power of His Spirit lays hold of us with operative force. We are not merely concerned with the "God-idea," but with experience of the living and actively working God, for it is not the purity and height of those thoughts that have conquered us, but the power of personal life which passed from them into us. This is what we mean when we speak of revelation.

Now it may be objected that we have already recognised the presence of God outside the biblical revelation, and that it is thus impossible to see why revelation cannot be assumed at other points of the history of religion. In answer to this it may be said that the peculiar blessedness of life of which we become conscious in Christianity is transmitted to us only through the biblical revelation. Through this revelation we become certain of the operative presence of God, and not through the teaching of any other religion. The living God is here recognised because His power is experienced. No other religion can show this power to the same degree and in this peculiarity; accordingly the Christian judges that God's nature becomes manifest and real only in the effects to which Christianity testifies. No matter

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how God may have made known His invisible being and His eternal power elsewhere (Rom. i. 19, 20 ; Acts xiv. 17 ; xvii. 23 ff.), He yet suffered the nations "to walk in their own ways" (Acts xiv. 16). It is the conviction of the whole New Testament that the heathen world is by no means entirely without God, and that knowledge of God is nevertheless to be attained only on the ground of revelation, because only here the grace and power are operative which forgive sin and inwardly renew life, so that unrighteousness which held down the truth in humanity (Rom. i. 18) is taken away. "Unto us God hath revealed it by the Spirit" (1 Cor. ii. 10) is a test which speaks of that which the whole world has sought in vain. Thus there is indeed a knowledge of God outside the revelation-religion also, but only by this religion does man become conscious of the living God ; hence only in it can a real revelation of God be considered possible. Other ideas of God and of His working have been conceived and they are in no way altogether false, but the God Who forgives sins and awakes a new moral life in the soul, Whose operation man therefore feels in his inmost heart, first became manifest to humanity in the religion of the prophets and of the New Testament. When a man experiences God's nature therein, he experiences revelation, and everything else that can be said of God is only framework, pre-

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paration or consequence, of this knowledge of God.

So it is intelligible that from the Christian standpoint a real revelation of God is recognised as existing only in the salvation-history. Yet it is not denied that pre-Christian intellectual evolution also stood under God's guidance, and that the heathen religions, too, possessed a certain knowledge of God. It is only necessary to add that he who has come to know the God of revelation gains in consequence a new understanding of His working in nature and in the past. In proportion as our personal lives have secured the Christian knowledge of God are we able to form new judgments upon the destinies of our life and the events of nature: similarly, we learn, when equipped with the new knowledge of God, to understand the ways of God in history (cf. Rom. xi. 33-36). As there is knowledge of God outside of revelation, so also there is a guidance of God. But as God's nature is known only in revelation, so this guidance of God is operative only that man may prepare himself and thereby be educated for the reception of revelation.¹

So the two states exist side by side, revelation and the educating of the human race for revelation, Christian faith and natural knowledge of God.

¹ As to the question of the "Evangelical Faith and the Facts of Salvation-History," see more particularly R. Seeberg, *Aus Religion und Geschichte*, Vol. II. (1909), p. 127 ff.

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Our considerations, however, went further. We recognised that the *Bible* is not the revelation itself, but a part of it, as the historical monument of revelation. The biblical authors were commissioned with a task of world-wide significance—to interpret the facts and ideas of revelation into firm conceptions and intelligible words. In the performance of this task they created a phraseology which not only penetrated their contemporaries with the truth of revelation, but which became for all time the intelligible and efficacious form of the revelation. Exposition and interpretation of the biblical formulæ of revelation have been the task of later generations. And the more energetically they attacked this task, the more has the unfailing truth of the biblical Gospel been confirmed in the spiritual life of humanity. The Spirit operative in revelation has been and is still working in the words of the Bible. We must, therefore, conclude that the same Spirit that produced revelation has produced also the permanent outward form of revelation in the Holy Scriptures, a form ever anew confirmed by the witness of the Spirit. The Spirit of God created the facts and the truths of revelation and also caused revelation to become efficacious in the witness of its first messengers for the production of an intelligible collection, redaction and interpretation of revelation in accordance with man's nature. Thus the sense

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and the connection of the facts became distinct, and the truths about God which appeared in the hearts of particular men became clear and intelligible words. And only so did revelation become a factor determining and regulating the spiritual life of humanity.

It was precisely this operation of the Spirit of revelation which lent to special persons the gift of understanding that we call inspiration in the narrower sense as the breathing of the Spirit into the prophets and the messengers of the Gospel. We are not concerned with mere speculation, but with recognition of a historical state of fact, when we consider these ideas. The "word of knowledge," the "word of wisdom," the "discerning of spirits," and "prophecy" were the charismata which singly or together constitute the gift of inspiration in this narrower sense which is limited to the words of the messengers of God. From this followed a practical form of the idea of inspiration, psychologically intelligible and historically well founded. This has been shown in detail. But this form of the idea made clear to us also the conditions as they existed in the Holy Scriptures. So it becomes comprehensible that the same authors who received the knowledge of facts from without claimed for the content of their message Divine truth, and that the witness of the same men in whose work manifold historical limitations and

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errors can be shown has proved and proves itself in history to be absolute religious truth. Thus this knowledge removes all check upon the historical investigation of the Bible, and also secures for us its irrefragable religious authority.

No one will object to the fact that we have concentrated our reflections on the New Testament. The supreme question for the Christian is the New Testament. It is its relation to the New Testament that alone lends to the Old its real significance and authority for the Christian. So far as the Lord and His disciples saw in the New Covenant the "fulfilling" of the Old Covenant, the original documents imparting religious knowledge under the Old Covenant, in other words the Old Testament, are for the Christian objects of religious reflection. But this thought includes two further points. First, the historical continuity and the material agreement between the Old and the New Testament ; secondly, the difference between both and the progress of the one beyond the other. For the summit of any line of evolution is related, not only positively, but also critically and negatively to the remaining points of this evolution. For the Christian the New Testament is thus not only the standard of criticism for all extra-biblical thoughts, but also for the Old Testament. Upon a whole we may admire the tact with which the Church—frequently without clear knowledge—has exercised this criticism

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and has also stated the value of the positive relationship of the two Testaments to one another. The thoughts of the Old Testament prophets or the fundamental tendencies of morals in the Old Covenant or the inward conception of religion in many Psalms are really direct and necessary preliminary steps to the religion of the New Covenant. On the other hand another element is apparent in this system of thought, namely, the legal conception of religion. We can therefore say that in the Old Testament there are two stages of religion to be recognised as concurrent, the legal religion and the redemptive religion of the New Covenant which is hoped for in the future (Jer. xxxi. 31 ff.). The positive connection of the latter with Christianity has been recognised from the beginning, and it has received a fixed expression in the name "New Testament." On the contrary, the elements of legal religion were rejected, or an attempt was made to render them inoperative by allegorical interpretations or moral transformations of meaning.

We have no occasion to enter upon this matter in detail. Of greater interest is the question whether under these circumstances an *inspiration of the Old Testament writings* is a possible conception. As regards the elements of redemptive religion in the Old Testament this question can easily be answered in the affirmative, so far as these show themselves the products of the same Spirit who

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rules in the New Testament. It is more difficult to answer the question in reference to the legal portions of the Old Testament writings. According to Paul, as also to Luther, no Divine power dwells in the law, that is, it does not give the Spirit. But if the witness of the Spirit is wanting to the law, it seems that the law cannot be regarded as a product of the Spirit. And therefore it seems to follow that there can be no question of an inspiration of these elements. But so to judge would be erroneous for this reason: Jesus saw in the law the expression of the Divine will. Then the law must be regarded as Divine revelation. And reasonably so. The law regarded as a moral principle is certainly revelation so far as it objectively declares the will of God to man. But this happens to the extent and in the form which mankind needs at a particular stage of evolution. It is a lower stage of the education of mankind which finds its expression in the principle of law. As the prophets, through the proclamation of the future sovereignty of God, inwardly prepared the people of Israel to experience this Divine sovereignty in Christ the Lord, so the presentation of the moral demands of God was a preparation for the experience of the Divine sovereignty which changed these demands in the heart of man through the Spirit to inward living motives. Precisely in this change men like Jeremiah and Ezekiel saw the

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new element which the New Covenant was to bring.

As we thus see in the promises of the prophets products of the same Spirit who brought forth the New Testament fulfilment, so the law too, as the objective expression of morality which through the Spirit becomes a subjective inward reality, may be regarded as Divine revelation. It is evident that the whole conception of religion was then advanced to a new stage, since through the Spirit the Divine sovereignty realised itself in the hearts of men. But the consequence was the abrogation of all outward commands of the law and of eudæmonistic motives (reward and punishment) to its fulfilment. In other words the Christian comprehension of the moral law has not only transferred this law to the heart of man, but has also objectively widened and deepened it in relation to the old law. The Christian interpretation of the law represents a progress not only in the mode of possession, but also in the nature of the thing possessed. But these considerations show that the law could not bring the Spirit. It did not bring the Spirit because it was not intended for that purpose, and reasonably so, for man was not inwardly ready to receive the Spirit. For precisely the same reason the idea of the redeeming sovereignty of God was first revealed to the people of Israel, not in the reality of spiritual experience, but in the form of political ideas for

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the future and of outward judgments or deliverances. The sovereignty of God through Spirit was the "fulfilment" not only of the promises but of the law in precisely the same way. Promise and law were preparatory and preliminary steps. They paved the way for the coming and also for the understanding of the redeeming sovereignty which realises itself through the working of the Spirit. In the spiritual sovereignty of Jesus Christ God became operative as king in humanity, and His Will became efficacious in the heart for the fulfilment of the law.

We may therefore say that there is a revelation of God which does not bring the Spirit but prepares for the coming of the Spirit. But since this is its task, we can understand that it too is given by God and effected through His Spirit. Thus we solve the difficulty that these words are God's revelation and yet do not bring the Spirit. The ideas of revelation were miraculously evoked in those who first received them, by the work of the Spirit which influenced them through facts and words, through visions and oracles, but this Spirit did not therefore in any way dominate the bearers of the prophetic messages; it is, on the contrary, to be expected only in the last time that God will pour out the Spirit upon all (Joel iii.). This limitation is characteristic of the Old Covenant. The Spirit of God produces

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indeed miraculous knowledge in individual spirits : He opens to them the prospect that the marvellous will one day penetrate the souls of all, but from this picture of the future there springs no spark of life into the soul. But this fact implies that those words which are evoked by the Spirit do not bring the Spirit but only prepare for Him.

The greater the divergence between revealed thought and current opinion during any given period of time, the more powerful must the capacity be in the proclaimers of revelation for its interpretation and translation. This capacity was inspiration in the strict sense. If now this divergence in the early period of revelation, when culture was on a lower stage, is naturally widest, there will have been no smaller need under the Old Covenant for an inspiration of the religious teachers and authors than in New Testament times. We must have a clear conception of this. Perusal of the books of the Old Testament prophets will soon show that long and rhetorical speeches are characterised as "words of Jahve," and that in these speeches Jahve appears speaking in the first person, and is also spoken of in the third person. The obvious inference to be drawn from the form of the speeches becomes certain, in view of the fact that the prophet indeed speaks with the feeling that God speaks through him, but that he himself gives an

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intelligible and efficacious form to what is revealed to him by God. If he nevertheless holds that his whole speech may claim Divine authority, he must also have the consciousness that it is God Who so guides his thinking and speaking that it is really the true expression of his feeling. Otherwise it were empty phrase when he characterises his word as God's utterance. We have a parallel case when Paul says he speaks in words which are taught by the Divine wisdom. We have here accordingly the same form of inspiration as we have recognised for the New Testament messengers of God.

The position is no less clear in the case of the historical books and the Pentateuch. The historical matter, of course, came to the authors from sources and from tradition. Their work was the choice, use and interpretation of the matter, and this work they must have carried out under the guidance of the Spirit. The so-called writings of Moses are known to have arisen in consequence of a gradual extension of the law, produced by attempts to make concrete use of the principle underlying the law and to carry it out in practice. The unknown author of Deuteronomy speaks in the first person as Moses, and yet gives rules which Moses can never have dictated, because they presuppose circumstances entirely different from those of the Mosaic time. This proceeding is comprehensible only on the

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view that the author wrote in the consciousness that he was carrying out the principle of the law. And precisely this impulse to interpret God's will and apply it to particular circumstances was the inspiration of those builders-up of the law. To them was imparted an understanding of the old law and its significance for the present which impelled them to adapt the law to the needs of their time. And they experienced this understanding and this impulse as a Divine operation, for only on this presupposition could they bring forward the use of the old principle of the thora as God's will and law. In other words, they thought and taught with the consciousness that their interpretations and developments came to them through the Spirit of God. It is clear that this again was the consciousness of inspiration. The use also which the prophets make of the law—although often proceeding differently—moves in the same line. The principle also holds good for the use of the law in the Psalmists or in Proverbs.

In conclusion we may say that we have recognised two points. There is a revelation of God in historical facts caused by God and in words inspired by God. Since this revelation shows itself in us as the operative will or as the Spirit of God, we are certain of its origin and character as Divine reality and truth. The revelation of God came to us through an original written monument, the

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Bible. The Bible offers us the comprehension of revelation as understood by original witnesses. But so far as this understanding of the revelation enables the Spirit of God to become operative in us, we are forced to refer this understanding of the revelation to special operations of the Spirit of God in revelation. And the creative power of revelation for the production of this understanding and of the capacity to give it lasting and intelligible expression is inspiration.

This double knowledge makes us certain of the unchangeable religious authority and power of Holy Scripture, but it affords to us at the same time the possibility of asserting without limit the historical character of the sacred books. This knowledge corresponds to the real interest we have in the Bible, both to the need of a sure religious authority and to the historical and critical interest of biblical research. It does not demand that uncritical apologetic which is ever burdened by an evil conscience, and it yet does not destroy the old faith which holds fast unchangeably the truth of the revelation of God.

From the primæval fount of God the waters stream to the valley, purifying, quickening and refreshing whomsoever they reach. They have dug their bed deep and hollowed their way through rock and stones. Men may conjecture the origin of these stones and this rock, and of the water and how it overcame all hindrances :

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such is their right and their duty. But the waters of life stream on into the valley and still refresh all to whom they come. All drink of them, even those who beat and hammer upon the stones above. May our age never be so absorbed by the stones as to forget the water. The great thirst of the heart has ever anew driven men from the stones to the water, and will so drive them also in these latter days.

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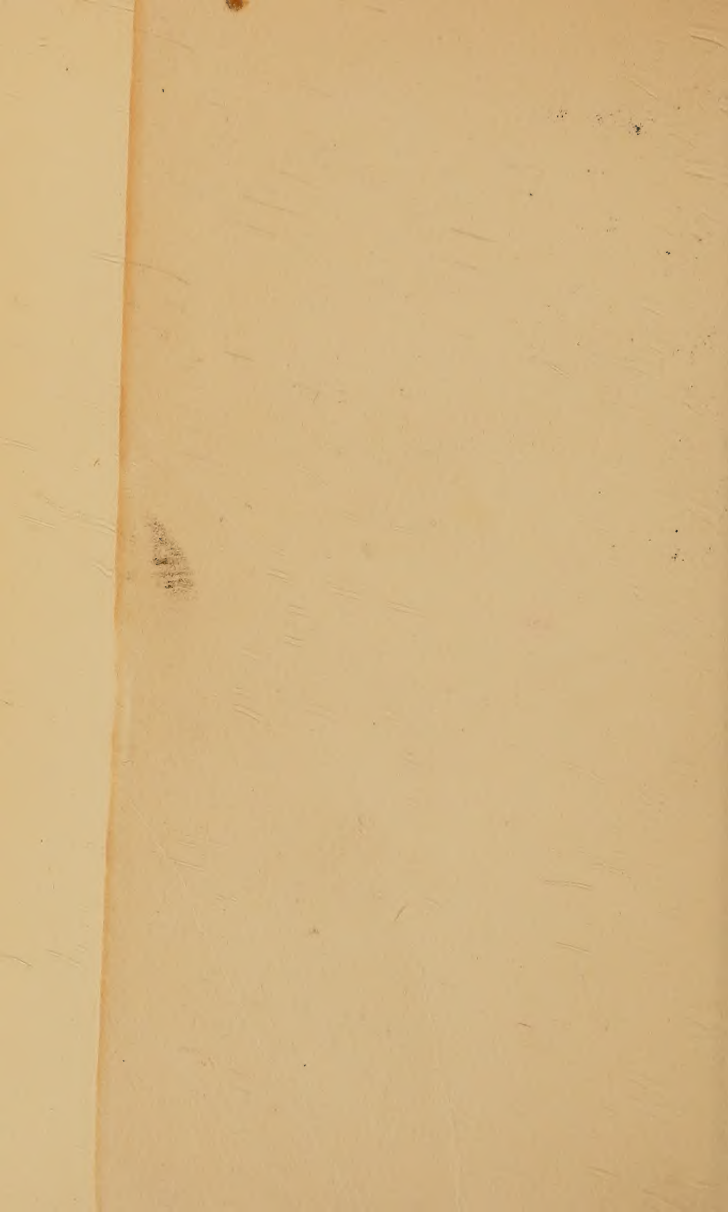
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